



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 13 MAY 2022

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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	05/12 US pledges \$150M ASEAN countries
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/12/US-pledges-150-million-ASEAN-countries-kick-off-summit/3431652399922/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/12/US-pledges-150-million-ASEAN-countries-kick-off-summit/3431652399922/</a>
GIST	<p>May 12 (UPI) -- President <a href="#">Joe Biden</a> hosted leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on Thursday, pledging \$150 million in new investments in the region.</p> <p>Biden <a href="#">announced the investments</a> in maritime security and clean energy infrastructure as well as funding for a facility to prevent future pandemics as he welcomed leaders from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam for the first day of the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>The promised U.S. funding includes \$60 million in new regional maritime initiatives that will see the U.S. Coast Guard deploy a cutter as well as other assets and personnel to the region to "promote a free and open Pacific" by training and assisting countries to improve law enforcement and combat illegal fishing operations.</p> <p>When asked about how ASEAN nations that are concerned about being caught between the United States and China publicly to agree to increased security cooperation, a <a href="#">senior administration official said</a> the United States is "not asking countries to make a choice between the United States and China."</p> <p>"We want to make clear, though, that the United States seeks stronger relationships, that we want to expand the areas of cooperation, and that we recognize that in order to do that, we need to be responsive to desires of countries in the region to work in areas that are important to them," the official said.</p> <p>Another \$40 million will be invested in clean energy infrastructure in Southeast Asia that will "decarbonize and strengthen the region's power system, increase regional energy trade and accelerate the deployment of clean energy technologies," the official said.</p> <p>The United States also committed \$15 million to expand access to genomic testing equipment and technology as well as programs to advance early detection and community response for <a href="#">COVID-19</a>, tuberculosis and other airborne diseases in the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/13 Turkey: no Sweden, Finland in NATO
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/erdogan-says-turkey-not-positive-finland-sweden-joining-nato-2022-05-13/">https://www.reuters.com/world/erdogan-says-turkey-not-positive-finland-sweden-joining-nato-2022-05-13/</a>
GIST	<p>ANKARA, May 13 (Reuters) - President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday it was not possible for NATO-member Turkey to support plans by Sweden and Finland to join the pact, saying the Nordic countries were "home to many terrorist organisations".</p> <p>Finland's plan to apply for NATO membership, announced Thursday, and the expectation that Sweden will follow, would bring about the expansion of the Western military alliance that Russian President Vladimir Putin aimed to prevent by launching the Ukraine invasion.</p> <p>"We are following the developments regarding Sweden and Finland, but we don't hold positive views," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul, adding it was a mistake for NATO to accept Greece as a member in the past.</p> <p>Turkey has been officially supportive of enlargement since it joined NATO 70 years ago. Any decision on enlargement must be made by unanimous agreement of its members.</p> <p>"As Turkey, we don't want to repeat similar mistakes. Furthermore, Scandinavian countries are guesthouses for terrorist organisations," Erdogan said.</p>

	<p>"They are even members of the parliament in some countries. It is not possible for us to be in favour," he added.</p> <p>Swedish Foreign Ministry could not immediately comment on Erdogan's statement.</p> <p>NATO states that membership is open to any "European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area".</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Russia largest military loss</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/russia-ukraine-nato-britain/2022/05/12/id/1069668/">https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/russia-ukraine-nato-britain/2022/05/12/id/1069668/</a>
GIST	<p>In recent days, two or more Russian battalions were picked off attempting to cross a pontoon bridge on the Donets River in the most significant loss since the beginning of the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine, <a href="#">The Telegraph</a> reported on Thursday.</p> <p>The shocking losses at the riverbank potentially included more than 100 vehicles and close to 1,000 troops, according to <a href="#">Forbes</a>.</p> <p>"We still assess Russian ground force in the Donbas to be slow and uneven," a U.S. Defense Department official told reporters on Tuesday, adding that the bridge itself was also destroyed.</p> <p>The Ukrainian armed forces' general staff stated the Russian battalion was attempting to strike the Ukrainian city of Lyman.</p> <p>"Artillerymen of the 17th tank brigade of the #UAarmy have opened the holiday season for [Russian forces]," Ukraine's defense ministry <a href="#">said on Twitter</a>. "Some bathed in the Siverskyi Donets River, and some were burned by the May sun."</p> <p>The subsequent shelling from Ukrainian forces destroyed more than 70 T-72 and T-80 tanks, BMPs, MT-LB armored tractors, a tugboat and the pontoon span.</p> <p>It is unclear how many Russian troops were wounded and vehicles destroyed, according to Forbes.</p> <p>The news comes as British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss called for more sanctions against Russia until its complete withdrawal from Ukraine and a peace agreement, <a href="#">CNN</a> reported.</p> <p>Truss also urged European allies to begin planning to help Ukraine rebuild from the war by providing financial and technical assistance "on the principle of a Marshall Plan."</p> <p>"To help Ukraine, we need to go further and faster," Truss said, <a href="#">Sky News</a> reported. "The best long-term security for Ukraine will come from it being able to defend itself. That means providing Ukraine with a clear pathway to NATO-standard equipment."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Retirement plans put on hold</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10810299/Americans-lament-state-401k-plans-stock-market-plunges.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10810299/Americans-lament-state-401k-plans-stock-market-plunges.html</a>
GIST	<p>Americans are voicing fears about their retirement savings as blue chip stocks continue to tank, raising concerns about a possible recession.</p> <p>As of Thursday, the benchmark S&amp;P 500 index has dropped more than 18 percent since the start of the year, wiping away \$7 trillion in market value from the companies in the index.</p>

The Dow Jones Industrial average is down nearly 14 percent since December, and bonds have also performed poorly despite their usual safe-haven status.

Most retirement accounts, including 401k and IRA plans, are invested in a mix of stocks and bonds, and Americans have seen steep declines in the value of their savings, with many dropping double-digits this year.

However, for younger workers that have decades left until their retirement, financial experts say there is no need to panic.

'Over a long period of time, buy and hold works,' said financial advisor Craig Ferrantino, founder of Craig James Financial, in an interview with DailyMail.com. 'But if you're uncomfortable, please take money off the table.'

For younger Americans who have not lived through a market downturn, double-digit declines in their retirement savings may seem especially disturbing.

But historically, even severe market pullbacks of 20 to 40 percent only last about 14 months, and the S&P 500 rises about three out of every four years, according to CNBC.

'In 10 years, this is going to be worked out,' James said of the current market turmoil. 'If I was ten years out from retirement -- let's say I'm 45 years old -- you have a good chance of success if you stay the course.'

For older Americans who are approaching retirement, the simultaneous pullback of both stocks and bonds may be cause for more concern, and could even prompt a reassessment of retirement plans.

James said that the nearer one is to retirement, the closer they should be examining their investments and assessing their risk exposure.

'Certainly if you're 65, you want to be taking a good look at your risk-reward profile,' he said. 'You could start to de-risk if you'd like, wait for the storm to pass, and if you like, get back in again.'

With markets in turmoil, many have taken to Twitter to lament the losses in their retirement accounts.

'My 401k is now a 301k,' lamented one Twitter user.

'I just checked out my 401k for the first time in a while. Hope your day is going better,' joked MLB analyst Ryan M. Spaeder.

Podcaster Lauren Goode tweeted: 'Password manager apps should literally have a 'are you sure you want to log into your 401k' pop-up right now.'

Roughly 60 million Americans have 401k plans holding collective assets of about \$7.3 trillion, according to the Investment Company Institute.

The nation's total retirement savings -- including IRAs and employer-sponsored plans -- were estimated at \$37.2 trillion last summer.

On Thursday, the S&P 500 was creeping toward confirming a bear market, Wall Street's term for a 20 percent decline from recent peaks.

Once-hot tech stocks have led the decline, with Apple, Amazon, Facebook-parent Meta and Google-parent Alphabet all down more than 20 percent so far this year.

Netflix has been the worst performer in the S&P 500, dropping a dizzying 71 percent since the end of December.

'The pullback in growth stocks, tech in particular, has been dramatic,' Brian Price, head of investment management at Commonwealth Financial Network, told Reuters.

'We have a reckoning, if you will, that maybe we did go too far too fast' with many of those stocks.

Inflation and rising interest rates have battered so-called growth stocks, which have most of their projected profits far off in the future, and trade at many times the value of their current earnings.

The Labor Department on Thursday reported that wholesale prices soared 11 percent in April from a year earlier.

Many of the costs at the wholesale level are being passed on to consumers as companies try to cover higher expenses. That has raised more concerns about a potential pullback in spending that could crimp economic growth.

On Wednesday, the Labor Department's report on consumer prices also came in hotter than Wall Street expected.

It also also showed a bigger increase than expected in prices outside food and gasoline, something economists call 'core inflation' and which can be more predictive of future trends.

Rising inflation has prompted the Federal Reserve to pull its benchmark short-term interest rate off its record low near zero, where it spent most of the pandemic.

It also said it may continue to raise rates by double the usual amount at upcoming meetings. Investors are concerned that the central bank could cause a recession if it raises rates too high or too quickly.

Inflation has been worsened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the conflicts impact on rising energy prices. China's recent lockdowns amid concerns about a COVID-19 resurgence have also worsened supply chain and production problems at the center of rising inflation.

The impact of higher prices for consumers has been global. On Thursday, Britain said its economy grew at the slowest pace in a year during the first quarter. That is raising fears that the country may be headed for a recession.

The latest round of corporate earnings are also being closely watched by investors as they assess how companies and industries are handling the pressure from inflation.

'We'll continue to pay attention to what the Fed has to say, but it's worthwhile to pay attention to company outlooks on earnings calls,' Price said.

'That's something that investors will focus more and more on as we go into the second half of the year, how durable are company earnings.'

Digital currencies are plunging in value today in a so-called 'crypto winter' that has lost investors billions and is fuelling fears that it is the harbinger of a wider stock market crash.

The world's second largest cryptocurrency Ethereum has joined the crash - plummeting in value by 20 per cent over the last 24 hours - in the digital downturn that is hammering investors who bought during the Covid years.

Cryptocurrencies are a form of digital money that use mathematics to create a unique piece of code that customers invest in.

Bitcoin was the original digital currency started in 2009 to bypass central banks, and an increasing number of offshoot currencies have been founded in recent years as well as digital art called non-fungible tokens.

They have all been sharply decreasing in value over the past few days including one currency that has lost 98% of its value as fears for the global economy spread and investors start to sell off risky assets.

More than \$200billion has been wiped off the cryptocurrency market today alone.

However investors in more traditional stocks are also hurting, with US tech stocks also plunging in recent weeks including Amazon which has fallen 30 per cent in a month.

The FTSE 100 was down 2.5 per cent this morning after official figures showed the UK economy growing slower than expected in the first quarter - and going into reverse in the final month and 2 per cent, respectively.

Many amateur investors took to buying stocks and digital currencies during the Covid pandemic and made money because values were generally rising in a so-called bear market.

Ethereum has now lost more than half of its value this year, Bitcoin has shed a third of its value since January and Luna with 99 per cent of its value wiped out in the last 48 hours with suicide hotlines pinned to the currency's Reddit page as a result.

Popular digital currency exchange Coinbase warned users could lose all of their money if the company goes bankrupt due to the crash.

During the pandemic, record low interest rates intending to boost economies led to investors buying riskier assets like cryptocurrency with higher rates of return.

As skyrocketing inflation leads to a rise in interest rates in order to safeguard savings, these assets are being sold in favour of safer government bonds - which will provide better returns.

The Bank of England pushed up interest rates by 0.25 per cent to a 13-year high of 1 per cent on May 5.

The Federal Reserve also raised their interest rates to 1 per cent on May 4 - with further rises expected to fend off the worst effect of inflation.

The NASDAQ experienced its sharpest one-day fall since June 2020 earlier this week and the crypto hit implies an increasing integration between crypto and traditional markets.

The index which features several high-profile tech companies, finished May 5 trading at \$12,317.69 with shopping sites such as Etsy and eBay driving the fall.

The two companies saw their values drop 16.8 per cent and 11.7 per cent respectively, after announcing lower than expected revenue estimates.

Previously high-flying tech stocks have begun to dramatically fall in value in recent months - fuelling fears of a broader economic crash and making investors less likely to purchase assets.

Elon Musk's Tesla has fallen 36 per cent in the last month amid news of the eccentric CEO's attempts to buy Twitter.

The electric car manufacturer is now trading at \$732 (£600), a dramatic drop from \$1145.45 (£937.69) a month ago.

It hit an eight-month low today, briefly dropping below \$700.

Musk, a vocal proponent of cryptocurrencies, has heavily influenced prices of Dogecoin and Bitcoin, and at one point had said the company would accept Bitcoin for purchasing its cars before axing plans.

Musk's frequent tweets on Dogecoin, including the one where he called it the 'people's crypto', have turned the once-obscure digital currency, which began as a social media joke, into a speculator's dream.

The panic over crypto's future led to slower transactions on the cryptocurrency exchange Binance.

Crypto traders bemoaned the ill-timed 'scheduled maintenance' which Binance announced earlier on Thursday - with some users on social media accusing the company of a deliberate ploy to stop them trading their assets in.

EToro global market strategist, Ben Laidler, said: 'Since the March 23, 2020 market low, Dogecoin has perhaps surprisingly led price performance, narrowly outperforming Tesla.

'Meanwhile bitcoin, the market's largest crypto asset, has outperformed other major tech stocks despite its recent dip, beating the likes of Apple, Amazon and Meta.'

The token's price surged by about 4,000 percent in 2021, after Musk posted a flurry of memes promoting the joke currency.

Delivery giant Amazon saw a 30 per cent drop on its price since April 11 with the stock hitting \$2132.60 (£1725.19) earlier today - down from \$3011.34 (£2468.75).

The fall of these stocks are fuelling fears that the 'dotcom bubble burst' of the early 2000s could be about to repeat.

In the late 1990s, the increase in computer and internet access led to large scale speculative trading in internet companies.

The interest resulted in companies with a '.com' suffix being valued very highly.

After the US Federal Reserve increased interest rates after the end of the 1990s boom, speculative trading dipped and caused the dotcom bubble to burst, sending values plummeting.

The amount of business done by crypto exchanges, which hold the 'blockchain' ledgers that record transactions, is already dropping heavily.

Despite the outlook, crypto traders on social media have taken to the platforms to poke fun at the crash, encourage others not to sell and in some cases grieve their losses.

The subreddit r/terraluna was inundated with several posts of investors noting their losses - with some saying they could lose their houses or had lost their life savings.

Admins of the online investing group even had to put suicide hotlines pinned to the top of the forum for investors.

The acronym 'HODL' - meaning Hold On for Dear Life - has been used in several of these memes after it gained popularity in previous crashes as traders bet their investments on the coins making a recovery.

'The crypto sell-off has been driven by the daunting macro backdrop of rising inflation and interest rates that has sent shockwaves through the tech sector, dragging cryptos down with it, confirming that Bitcoin and others serve little purpose as a hedge against inflation,' said Victoria Scholar, head of investments at Interactive Investors.

Popular cryptocurrency Luna lost its pegging to the dollar this week, falling below \$1 per coin, causing prices to drop dramatically as the industry panicked (similar to a run on a bank).

The coin, also called Terra, lost 99 per cent of its value in the last 48 hours.

'The Terra incident is causing an industry-based panic, as Terra is the world's third-biggest stable coin,' said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, a senior analyst at Swissquote Bank.

But TerraUSD 'couldn't hold its promise to maintain a stable value in terms of U.S. dollars.'

The crypto downturn has wiped more than \$1.5trillion of value from the markets but investors will still be hoping that prices will be able to recover as they have done in the past.

However, unlike previous crashes, experts think that this latest drop in prices could prove permanent due to broader fears about global recession

Bitcoin hit and then-high of \$19,754.19 (£16,194.81) on December 17, 2017 before falling below \$11,000 (£9,000) just five days later - losing nearly 45 per cent of its peak.

The price recovered to pre-crash levels in November 2021.

The downturn has led to Coinbase, an online trading platform, issuing a stark warning to customers: Your crypto is at risk if the exchange goes bankrupt.

The popular exchange saw its value drop 27 per cent as a result of the crash.

According to Coinbase's official website, the company has more than 98 million verified users. It is the largest cryptocurrency exchange platform in the United States.

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HEADLINE	05/13 UAE president dies
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/13/middleeast/uae-president-dies-intl/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/13/middleeast/uae-president-dies-intl/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Abu Dhabi, UAE (CNN)Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates President whose modernization policies helped transform his country into a regional powerhouse, died on Friday aged 73, state media WAM said.</p> <p>"The Ministry of Presidential Affairs mourn the people of the UAE, the Arab and Islamic nations, and the whole world. The leader of the nation and the patron of its march, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the State, passed away to the Lord's side today, Friday, May 13," WAM said.</p> <p>"The Ministry of Presidential Affairs announces an official mourning and flags to be flown at half-mast for the late His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, may God have mercy on him, for a period of 40 days, starting today, and suspending work in ministries, departments, federal and local institutions, and the private sector for 3 days, starting today (Friday)," WAM said in a tweet.</p> <p>Sheikh Khalifa's role had been largely ceremonial since he suffered a stroke and underwent surgery in 2014. His brother and Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, has been widely seen as the de-facto leader of the UAE, handling day-to-day affairs for the Gulf state.</p> <p>Sheikh Khalifa was appointed as the second president of the UAE in 2004, succeeding his father and founder of the nation, Sheikh Zayed al Nahyan.</p> <p>Born in 1948 in the Eastern Region of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khalifa was the eldest son of Sheikh Zayed. Prior to his role as president, he was crown prince of Abu Dhabi and headed Abu Dhabi's Supreme Petroleum Council, which drafts oil policy.</p>



	<p>As president he headed one of the largest investment funds in the world, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, managing hundreds of billions of dollars in assets.</p> <p>One of the world's tallest buildings, the Burj Khalifa, took on his name after the UAE government bailed Dubai out of its debt, and as a sports fan he supported the acquisition of English Premier League soccer club Manchester City.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Intense fighting Ukraine bridge site</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-13-22/h_312acec16eefedc655cf9512ca74d0d2">https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-13-22/h_312acec16eefedc655cf9512ca74d0d2</a>
GIST	<p>The Ukrainians are continuing to pushback a Russian advance across the <a href="#">Siverskyi Donets River</a> near Bilohorivka, a satellite image from BlackSky shows.</p> <p>The fighting is taking place along the same bend in the river where the Russians <a href="#">constructed two pontoon bridges</a>, which the Ukrainians blew up.</p> <p>The satellite image, taken Thursday afternoon, shows large plumes of smoke rising from a dense forest just west of the river. Fighting also appears to be occurring in the area where the Russian pontoon bridges were deployed.</p> <p>Smoke is obscuring much of that area, but through it, an object — a possible third Russian pontoon bridge — is seen bridging the river. The object seen crosses the entire river; drone photos of the first two destroyed pontoon bridges show they no longer cross the body of water.</p> <p>Serhiy Hayday, the Luhansk regional military administrator, said on Wednesday the Russians are continuing to try to construct bridges across the Siverskyi Donets River. He also said that the Ukrainians have repeatedly blown them up.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Police agencies struggle to recruit</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/us-police-departments-cops-job-recruitment-anti-cop-climate">https://www.foxnews.com/us/us-police-departments-cops-job-recruitment-anti-cop-climate</a>
GIST	<p>Small and mid-sized police departments are grappling with maintaining staffing levels that have, in some cases, dipped to their lowest levels in decades, but recruiters are finding new ways to attract new candidates.</p> <p>Big-city police departments such as Chicago's are not the only jurisdictions facing hiring woes, as small- and mid-sized police departments, such as <a href="#">Missouri's Independence Police Department</a> and New Haven Police Department in Connecticut, are struggling to fill a record number of vacancies. Departments have, in some instances, reached some of the lowest staffing levels they've seen, representatives tell Fox News Digital.</p> <p>"Right now, we're allocated 230 officers for our department for commissioned officers, and we are about 38 short," Independence Police Officer Jack Taylor, the agency's public information officer, told Fox News Digital Thursday. "I've been here 20-plus years. I don't think I've ever seen where we've had that many officer vacancies."</p> <p>As a result, <a href="#">Independence Police Department</a> has had to pull officers from other units in the department, such as investigations, community services and the traffic unit, to cover patrols, Taylor said.</p> <p>Officers from the patrol unit are "the ones that go answer 911 calls and calls for service from citizens," he explained. "We have to make sure that that's adequately staffed, and we don't have those people."</p>

"The other units in the department tend to suffer because of that," he added. "It kind of trickles down to the community not getting the type of service that we'd like to provide."

As a result of officers being moved to the patrol unit, Taylor said, "there's less detectives there to investigate your case."

"Your case is going to take a little bit longer to get assigned to a detective," he added. "There's less traffic officers. There's less accident investigators responding to an accident."

Taylor said he believed the issues his department is facing extend "nationwide."

"Officers really haven't been portrayed in the best light here lately," Taylor said. "Even within the last couple of years, officers every day run the risk of being indicted, being sued, being killed – sometimes all three in the same call. I think people look at it and go, 'Do I really want to get into that mess?'"

[New Haven Police Department](#) has experienced similar staffing struggles, with 72 vacancies as of Thursday, Capt. David Zannelli said.

"It's one of the lowest levels we've ever been on," Zannelli, of the department's Professional Standards & Training Division, said.

The department has 408 positions, but only 336 are filled. Zannelli attributed the vacancies to multiple issues, including anti-police rhetoric and an inability to offer competitive compensation.

"You have a lot of the criticism on policing — some of it warranted, some of it not," Zannelli said. "The defund movement has taken a toll on us."

The department has also gone through contractual changes, which have altered the retirement package offered to new recruits.

"Despite those small numbers or those low staffing numbers that my agency is at right now, my officers are working twice as hard," Zannelli said. "Right now, our violent crime is lower than every other major city. And the town of Hamden, which is our neighboring town."

Nonetheless, he said, the hard work comes at a cost to the officers.

"I think the cost is, a lot of times, personal. And what I mean by that is the officers are missing time with their families," Zannelli said.

Small- to mid-sized police agencies account for the majority of departments nationwide, said crime and policing expert John DeCarlo.

DeCarlo, a criminal justice professor for the University of New Haven's Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences, told Fox News Digital the police-to-citizen ratio has not been "keeping pace with the increase in population."

Taking a wide lens to police departments nationwide, only about 17 police departments cover jurisdictions with populations of more than one million people, he said.

"Really, the biggest number of police departments ... are in the cities and towns with less than 2,500 people," said DeCarlo, a former police chief and 34-year veteran of Branford Police Department in Connecticut. "And there are about 3,900, about 4,000 police departments that serve populations under 10,000."

The southeast boasts the highest number of police officers, specifically Oklahoma, Kansas, north Texas and North Carolina, he said. And while the number of police officers has increased minimally over the past year, so has the population, DeCarlo said.

"We saw a small increase of about four-tenths of a percent in police over the last year," he explained. "However, we saw more of an increase in population.

"So, although there was that minuscule increase in police, there was a larger increase in population. So, what happens is the ratio of police to the number in the population goes down."

Betsy Brantner Smith, a 29-year police veteran, said adequately staffing police departments nationwide has been "a big issue," especially in departments that don't boast the same manpower numbers as those in major cities.

"I don't think most people know this: Most police departments are under 20 officers," Brantner Smith told Fox News Digital.

When she's not serving as spokesperson for the National Police Organization, Brantner Smith travels the country providing training and education to police departments.

"Most police departments are not these ginormous agencies. And it's already tough to attract people to those small departments," she added. "Then, you introduce [the] defund the police [movement] and vilification of police, and it makes it very difficult."

Difficulties in recruitment can sometimes lead to a police departments hiring less qualified candidates, she noted. But smaller police departments often have one advantage, she added. Many police officers employed by big cities are now considering whether "they want to leave and go somewhere where they're more appreciated."

"What smaller departments need to do right now is ... to get the word out that they're hiring, and that they want to attract these big city candidates," she said. "The problem is, is that takes money."

Fort Lauderdale Police Department's recruiters erected billboards in Chicago and in New York City's Times Square.

"Wish you were here!" a Chicago billboard states. "WE'RE HIRING."

Fort Lauderdale Det. Brandon Diaz, who works for the department's recruiting unit, said the use of the billboards is paying off because 524 of the department's 530 positions are currently filled.

"We've done a great job with hiring," Diaz said, "and I think the billboard had a lot to do with that."

Thirty-two uniformed members left the Fort Lauderdale Police Department in 2019. Another 32 left in 2020, and 41 left in 2021, Diaz said.

"That was one-fifth of our workforce that we lost from 2019 until now," Diaz went on.

The Police Executive Research Forum conducted a survey that was published in March 2022 that found police departments have experienced "steady staffing decrease over the past two years."

The nonprofit agency surveyed its member agencies and received 184 responses, which showed "agencies still face serious staffing issues."

"Hiring of new officers seemed to rebound in 2021 after falling sharply in 2020," [PERF found](#). "However, increases in resignations and retirements continued to put pressure on overall staffing levels of officers."

	<p><a href="#">Burlington, Massachusetts</a>, Police Chief Thomas Browne told Fox News Digital his department is fully staffed with 68 members, "from myself down to the junior patrol officer."</p> <p>But filling the roles did not come without resistance, and he has seen a declining number of applicants, he told Fox News Digital.</p> <p>"We've absolutely seen people who've said, 'Hey, I don't know how you guys do this job in this climate. I don't want to be on the list anymore,'" he explained. "But we're not having a problem getting the people because the people who are taking our exam are very good, very much qualified and quality candidates."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Russia sexual violence against children</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-news-russia-war-children-sexual-violence-un-displaced-refugees/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-news-russia-war-children-sexual-violence-un-displaced-refugees/</a>
GIST	<p><i>United Nations</i> — Britain's ambassador to the United Nations said Thursday that there were "credible" claims Russian forces have committed sexual violence against children in Ukraine, as U.N. agencies said Vladimir Putin's invasion had driven more than 6 million people to flee the country. The U.N. refugee agency reported the grim statistic, which, combined with the roughly 8 million Ukrainians who have been displaced within their country, means a third of Ukraine's people have been forced from their homes.</p> <p>The war's effect on Ukraine's youth has been particularly devastating, and Britain's U.N. ambassador said that appeared to extend to sexual violence committed against children by the invading forces.</p> <p>British Ambassador Barbara Woodward, citing the U.N. humanitarian agency, said at least 238 children were believed to be among the thousands of civilians killed since Russia launched its war, with 347 more injured.</p> <p>"There are credible allegations of sexual violence against children by Russian forces," Woodward added. "As others have said, mass displacement has <a href="#">left children exposed to human trafficking</a> and sexual exploitation."</p> <p>Last month, Ukrainian lawmaker Kira Rudyk <a href="#">told CBS News</a> that sexual violence was being used systematically "in all the areas that were occupied by the Russians."</p> <p>"Rape is used as a tool of war in Ukraine to break our spirits, to humiliate us and to show us that we can be helpless to protect our women and children and their bodies," Kira Rudyk, a member of Ukraine's Parliament, told CBS News. "It is happening systematically in the occupied territories."</p> <p>At the Security Council on Thursday, U.N. children's agency (UNICEF) Deputy Executive Director Omar said "children and parents tell us of their 'living hell,' where they were forced to go hungry, drink from muddy puddles, and shelter from constant shelling and bombardments, dodging bombs, bullets and landmines as they fled."</p> <p>He called the war "a child protection and child rights crisis."</p> <p>"Children in Ukraine have been displaced, hurt, orphaned, or killed," U.S. Deputy U.N. Ambassador Richard Mills told diplomats. "Of the nearly 14 million people forced to flee their homes since the conflict escalated, approximately half are innocent children; children who deserve a chance to live, grow, and thrive, but instead, are struggling every day to survive in horrific circumstances."</p> <p>Briefing diplomats at the Security Council, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya said "civilians — particularly women and children — are paying the heaviest price" in the war.</p>

	<p>Msuya said the situation was deeply worrying in the Luhansk region, in eastern Ukraine's industrial heartland of Donbas, where Russia is currently focusing its assault. She said there were an estimated 40,000 people cut off from electricity, water and gas supplies there alone.</p> <p>The U.N. Human Rights Council met in a special session in Geneva on Thursday, meanwhile, where High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said "1,000 civilian bodies had been found in the Kyiv region alone... some had been killed in hostilities, but others appeared to have been summarily executed."</p> <p>"These killings of civilians often appeared to be intentional, carried out by snipers and soldiers. Civilians were killed when crossing the road or leaving their shelters to seek food and water. Others were killed as they fled in their vehicles," Bachelet said.</p> <p>CBS News partner network BBC News <a href="#">documented one such alleged killing</a> on Thursday. The network obtained video from multiple security cameras around a business outside of Kyiv that appear to show several Russian soldiers shooting an unarmed civilian security guard in the back, and then looting the business.</p> <p>One of the soldiers is seen breaking a security camera with the butt of his rifle, apparently upon realizing that he and his colleagues' actions were being recorded.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 UK sanctions Putin's girlfriend</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/alina-kabaeva-vladimir-putins-rumored-secret-lover-and-mother-of-his-kids-hit-with-string-of-uk-sanctions?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/alina-kabaeva-vladimir-putins-rumored-secret-lover-and-mother-of-his-kids-hit-with-string-of-uk-sanctions?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>The British government on Friday sanctioned <a href="#">Alina Kabaeva</a>, the Olympic champion gymnast who is allegedly Vladimir Putin's longtime lover and mother of some of his children, in a move expected to rile the Russian president as his war in Ukraine nears its 80th day.</p> <p>"Today's sanctions will hit this cabal who owe Putin their wealth and power, and in turn support Putin and his war machine," <a href="#">the British government said in a release.</a></p> <p>Countries around the world have been working to cut off Putin and his inner circle of oligarchs and cronies since his February invasion of Ukraine as a way to crank up the pressure on Moscow and cut key allies off from the world financial system. But the pressure is growing to expand that list to include his family members and closest allies to make the sanctions sting.</p> <p>The British sanctions targeting Kabaeva also target her grandmother, Anna Zatseplina, as well as Putin's ex-wife, Lyudmila Ocheretnaya, and several other associates and family members.</p> <p>The European Union, too, has proposed sanctioning Kabaeva, one European sanctions authority told The Daily Beast, but the potential sanctions have been held up due to <a href="#">Hungary's objections</a> over banning oil from Russia. <a href="#">Bloomberg News</a> first reported the rumored sanctions.</p> <p>Kabaeva, who took gold in rhythmic gymnastics at the 2004 Olympic Games, has since retired and began working in politics as a pro-Kremlin lawmaker in Russia. She has since founded a charitable foundation and has worked as the head of the Russian National Media Group, which oversees pro-government media, cashing in with a salary hovering near \$12 million as of 2018, according to <a href="#">The Wall Street Journal</a>.</p> <p>Her leadership in the media group, and its role in pushing Russian propaganda and thereby undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity in the war, is part of why she is up for sanctions, Bloomberg News reported.</p> <p>The Kremlin has denied <a href="#">the romantic links between Putin and Kabaeva</a>.</p>

“His family members form a core contingent of his inner circle—receiving positions of power due to their affiliation to the regime,” the British government said Friday.

The Biden administration has been considering sanctioning Kabaeva, but she was spared in recent days, in part because White House officials feared that sanctioning her would be viewed as such a low and personal blow that Putin might escalate the war in Ukraine in response, [as the Journal reported](#).

The White House has indicated that more sanctions are yet to come.

“No one is safe from our sanctions,” White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, when asked about Kabaeva, said last week. “There’s more we will likely do.”

The tightening grip on the Kremlin inner circle comes as [Putin weighs escalating the war in Ukraine](#) beyond just the eastern regions of the country, in a return to his old goals of the conflict, intelligence officials in the Biden administration warned lawmakers this week.

But his private life may still prove a more volatile influence on the war. Putin has long been touchy about his private life, seeking to keep it guarded from public view. It’s been rumored Kabaeva gave birth to at least one of his children in a hospital in Switzerland in 2015, and that she is the mother of several of his other children as well.

Putin has previously commented on his rigid focus on shielding his private life from public view. “I have a private life in which I do not permit interference. It must be respected,” Putin said following reports he was romantically involved with Kabaeva.

When the *Moskovsky Korrespondent* reported that Putin’s former marriage had ended in divorce, and he was engaged to be married to Kabaeva at St. Petersburg’s Konstatinovsky Palace, [the publication quickly shut down](#), citing mysterious financial issues.

“Of course, society has the right to know about the lives of public figures, but even in this case there are certain limits,” Putin said at the time, according to a report from [RFERL](#).

But Kabaeva, who is rumored to have taken up [residence in a chalet in Switzerland](#) while Putin wages war, according to Page Six reporting, is getting a flurry of negative attention for benefitting from her ties with the Kremlin. [A petition](#) that’s gained more than 70,000 signatures has been circulating, calling for her expulsion from Switzerland.

“Despite the current war, Switzerland continues to host an accomplice of Putin’s regime,” the petition reads.

[The Wall Street Journal](#) has also reported Kabaeva was spotted in Switzerland.

It is unclear at this time if Kabaeva is indeed in Switzerland, though. She was spotted last month at a gymnastics event in Moscow, according to photos that Ekaterina Sirotna, the head coach of Russia’s junior national rhythmic gymnastics team, posted on Instagram.

And regardless of the extent of her rumored romantic relationship, Kabaeva has been enriched by her work for the regime and has appeared to be pushing pro-Kremlin and pro-war propaganda herself.

Just last month, she stood in front of posters showing the “Z” logo, symbolic of support for the Russian war in Ukraine, to deliver remarks at the gymnastics event.

“Every family has a war-related story, and we must pass these stories to next generations,” Kabaeva said. “We will only win from this.”



	<p>Putin may not have a neutral party in the Swiss to shield his alleged mistress, despite the country's tendency to declare neutrality, though. Switzerland has jumped on board with other European and Western nations to sanction Russians and implement punitive measures. And even though <a href="#">Jacques Pitteloud</a>, the Swiss ambassador to the U.S., has said his nation will maintain a legal definition of neutrality, <a href="#">the Swiss have sanctioned hundreds of Russians</a> since the war began, including two of Putin's daughters, so it seems that loved ones are not off the table.</p> <p>The Swiss embassy in the U.S. did not immediately return a request for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Simple ratio influence on military strategy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-a-simple-ratio-came-to-influence-military-strategy-11652434202?mod=hp_lead_pos8">https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-a-simple-ratio-came-to-influence-military-strategy-11652434202?mod=hp_lead_pos8</a>
GIST	<p>Early in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it wasn't just Moscow that believed its offensive could succeed quickly. In February, even U.S. officials warned Kyiv could fall in days.</p> <p>Russians had numbers on their side, or more precisely a number: the 3:1 rule, the ratio by which attackers must outnumber defenders in order to prevail. It is one of several "force ratios" popular in military strategy. Russia, it seemed, could amass that advantage.</p> <p><a href="#">The war in Ukraine</a> has brought renewed interest in force ratios. Other ratios in military doctrine include the numbers needed to defeat unprepared defenders, resist counterinsurgencies or counterattack flanks. Though they sound like rules of thumb for a board game like Risk, the ratios have been taught to generations of both American and Soviet and then Russian tacticians, and provide intuitive support for the idea Ukraine was extremely vulnerable.</p> <p>"I would imagine that most of them are thinking in those terms, that you need something on the order of a 3:1 advantage to break through," said John Mearsheimer, a University of Chicago professor whose work focuses on security competition between great powers. "It's clear in this case that the Russians badly miscalculated."</p> <p>Modern versions of the 3:1 rule apply to local sectors of combat. <a href="#">A Rand Corp. study</a> determined a theater-wide 1.5-to-1 advantage would allow attackers to achieve 3:1 ratios in certain sectors.</p> <p>Overall, Russia's military has quadruple the personnel and infantry vehicles, triple the artillery and tanks, and nearly 10 times the armored personnel carriers, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the London-based think tank.</p> <p>With 190,000 Russian troops concentrated to invade in February, and Ukraine's military spread across the country, (only 30,000 troops, for example, were estimated to be in Ukraine's east near the Donbas region) it appeared Russia had the numbers to overwhelm Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia's struggles underscore how real wars are far more complex, said Stephen Biddle, a Columbia University professor who served on strategic assessment teams for U.S. generals David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal in Iraq and Afghanistan.</p> <p>"The empirical evidence for it is extremely weak," said Mr. Biddle. "It's not some law of science. It corresponds to some degree of intuition, but it's a lousy social-science theory."</p> <p>Ratios don't account for <a href="#">Western intelligence</a> and <a href="#">materiel support</a>, for <a href="#">Ukrainian resolve</a>, for <a href="#">low Russian morale</a>, for <a href="#">Russia's logistical struggles</a>, or for severe Russian tactical errors, like leaving tanks exposed in columns on major roadways, Mr. Biddle said.</p> <p>(In planning real combat operations, the U.S. military uses far more detailed analyses than rules of thumb, he said.)</p>

These ratios originate from 19th-century European land wars.

In his seminal 1832 text on military strategy, “On War,” the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz proclaimed: “The defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive.” By the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Prussians distilled this to requiring triple the attackers. Prussia decisively triumphed; maybe they were on to something.

World War I, with years of stalemate in the trenches as combatants struggled to break through defenses, lent further credibility to the idea.

English Brigadier-General James Edmonds, writing shortly after World War I, recorded an early version of the rule: “It used to be reckoned in Germany that to turn out of a position an *ebenbürtigen* foe—that is, a foe equal in all respects, courage, training, morale and equipment—required threefold numbers.”

After World War II, Colonel A.A. Sidorenko promoted the ratio in Soviet military doctrine. The U.S. incorporated ratios in the 1955 update to the Army Field Manual—America’s military doctrine—that umpires used to referee war-game outcomes.

There were skeptics, too. According to [a monograph on the ratios’ history](#) by Army Major Joshua T. Christian, General of the Army Omar Bradley was one critic, worrying that tacticians were constraining their strategies in deference to overly simplistic rules of thumb. Yet the ratios remain in [the U.S. Army Field Manual](#) today.

In the 1980s, the ratios were central to a fierce debate over whether the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, with superior numbers to NATO in Europe, could sweep to victory in conventional war. On one side, Mr. Mearsheimer argued Soviet-aligned forces would struggle to reach the 3:1 ratio where it counted, and thus [could not swiftly crush NATO](#).

He argued then and now that the rule applies narrowly to forces engaged in [immediate breakthrough battles](#). Today, if Russia can amass enough force in one location, he worries, it could punch through the Ukrainian line. Once punctured, the tide can turn rapidly—such as, he said, when Nazis invaded France via the lightly defended Ardennes Forest.

Others scholars, like Joshua Epstein, promoted dynamic mathematical models to assess the military balance. Then a Brookings Institution fellow, [he argued ratios were useless](#), citing examples where defenders or attackers prevailed far outside the ratio.

(For Risk, [the math actually is clear](#): Attackers win most large battles if they have 86% of the defending force, plus two. Just 88 attackers will usually beat 100 defenders; that makes a mockery of the 3:1 rule.) [Before consensus](#) was reached, the Cold War ended. For a happy generation, major European land wars seemed unimaginable. Mr. Epstein turned his mathematical modeling to diseases; he is now an epidemiologist at New York University.

Still, he said of Ukraine: “It’s obvious in this case, the force ratio, the number of static units, are a very poor predictor of what’s going to happen on the battlefield.”

To Mr. Epstein, force ratios exemplify a quip from the writer H.L. Mencken—and a lesson Russia is learning the hard way:

“There is always a well-known solution to every human problem—neat, plausible and wrong.”

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HEADLINE	05/13 Rumblings of policy discontent in China?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/13/china-zero-covid-xi-policy-resentment/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/13/china-zero-covid-xi-policy-resentment/</a>



## GIST

In a surreal scene on the front steps of a locked-down Shanghai apartment complex, a resident in a bright red rain jacket, mask and face visor lectured a team of hazmat-clad Chinese officials about the limits of state power.

With the vocal support of his neighbors, he expressed frustration over the quarantine measures locking people in their homes, arguing that state authority is bound by what the law authorizes. “I want to ask you, which clause of which of our country’s laws gives you this power?” he said, according to a video of the incident widely shared online.

The impromptu legal lecture comes amid a fresh wave of resentment over state overreach in Shanghai, where, in a bid to end China’s worst coronavirus outbreak since 2020, the city government this week further tightened restrictions in certain districts. In some areas, residential buildings and shops have been boarded up. Officials confiscated house keys to prevent isolation jailbreaks, while the empty homes of those put into centralized quarantine have been turned upside down as they are doused with disinfectant.

The escalating disruption of daily life from China’s “zero covid” policy, promoted at the highest level, risks alienating a population that has come to rely on what some scholars describe as the Communist Party’s implicit contract with the public: The leadership supports the economy, allows people to get rich and stays out of everyday affairs in exchange for political quiescence.

“The tacit agreement between us has been broken,” said a Shanghai-based Chinese journalist who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions. “Originally, you let me live a happy life, I wouldn’t do things against your interests, but that kind of trust no longer exists. I think that could be the most serious issue [caused by lockdown].”

While policymakers appear genuinely concerned about a possible “tsunami” of infections and deaths from the coronavirus spreading unchecked, the choice to stick with the current policy was also made because President Xi Jinping believes China reaching zero cases demonstrates the superiority of its governance over Western democracies, particularly the United States, according to Lynette Ong, a professor of Chinese politics at the University of Toronto.

“He pushed himself into a corner, where it’s difficult to walk the policy back,” she said.

The politicized nature of the zero-covid policy is raising fears about Xi’s style of personal rule, which increasingly relies on mass mobilizations where every person is expected to follow orders. That reassertion of the party into the lives of everyday citizens is drawing comparisons to dark periods of China’s past and sparking fears that there is no longer space in society to live a quiet life uninterrupted by ideologically motivated campaigns.

The Shanghai lockdown escalation was prompted by a meeting last week of the powerful Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party where Xi doubled down on the policy of total intolerance for coronavirus infections in the general population. The meeting concluded that anyone who doubts or denies the approach should be “struggled” against.

Shortly afterward, Shanghai began reversing what had been a gradual, if uneven, relaxation. Li Qiang, the local party secretary, described the new measures as “military orders,” invoking a practice in which army officers pledge to either deliver success or accept martial punishment for failure.

“It definitely has overtones of the ‘great leap forward’ in the 1950s where politics is in command,” said Carl Minzner, a senior fellow for China studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, referring to Mao Zedong’s disastrous campaign to catch up with industrialized nations’ steel and grain production that ended in mass famine.

One of the defining tragedies of Mao’s rule was skewed policy, due in part to fearful low-level officials reporting a rosier picture than reality to superiors. The famine in the wake of the great leap was

exacerbated by localities covering up their grain shortages. Critics say Xi, too, could make such misjudgments, as dissenting voices are stifled and local officials tell higher-ups what they want to hear.

In the post-Mao reform period beginning in 1978, party leaders began leaving day-to-day control to the experts, which allowed more openness and discussion. But since Xi has taken charge, the party has reasserted itself.

“That has a deadening effect on discussion within the party state,” Minzner said. “People start to parrot what they think the top leader wants to hear. And lo and behold, the policymaking becomes very brittle and very extreme.”

Speculation has swirled about the political ramifications of public anger over lockdowns ahead of a leadership reshuffle in the fall, when many of the party’s most senior officials are expected to be replaced.

Some analysts say the backlash in Shanghai will make it harder for Li, the 62-year-old party boss who is considered a Xi ally, to secure a top position on the Politburo Standing Committee.

Aside from tracking possible promotions or demotions, however, most expect Xi’s direct control over decision-making to be increased at the Congress. This could take the form of a new title such as “party chairman” or “people’s leader.” Xi’s personal political ideology may also be elevated in status so it is on par with that of party founder Mao.

Yet acts of violence by police and low-level officials enforcing the restrictions in Shanghai have led to online comparisons with the chaos and trauma of the Mao era’s later years. In a video posted to the microblog Weibo on Monday, a homeowner wanders through his apartment noting everything that went missing during disinfection, including food from the fridge, bedsheets, curtains and clothes.

The most-liked comment beneath the video read “Ah, I’ve seen this in history books, its search and confiscation,” a reference to a common practice during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, when radical “red guards” would raid homes in search of banned items.

While Xi’s style of governing remains distinct from Mao’s preference for chaotic mass movements, scholars say both leaders share a preference for political campaigns to mobilize the whole society.

In a sign of how fed up residents are, middle-class Shanghaiers like man in the red raincoat are now appealing to the rule of law to push back against state overreach.

He was possibly inspired by Chinese jurist Luo Xiang, who, in a lecture that went viral, explained how state power should extend only as far as what is codified in law. In video after video, residents began echoing Luo to demand legal justification for the harsh measures.

But China’s top leaders are less interested in the law than in achieving the outcomes they desire — even if it means breaking that law — the Shanghai-based journalist warned: “Chinese politics is about results. Law is about procedure, but they don’t care about procedure. They just want results.”

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HEADLINE	05/12 DHS prepares migrant surge end of Title 42
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/dhs-details-preparations-to-process-migrant-surge-after-end-of-title-42/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/dhs-details-preparations-to-process-migrant-surge-after-end-of-title-42/</a>
GIST	As a legal challenge to the lifting of Title 42 at the southern border moves through court, Department of Homeland Security officials told the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee last Thursday that they have plans underway to safely and efficiently process an expected surge of people seeking entrance to the country.

Since March 20, 2020, migrants and asylum-seekers have been turned away at the southern border because of the Department of Health and Human Services' emergency regulation to prevent entry when there is "serious danger" of introducing a communicable disease into the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's implementation of Title 42 allows the Department of Homeland Security to make exceptions on "consideration of significant law enforcement, officer and public safety, humanitarian, and public health interests." The order did not apply to those presenting valid travel documents at a port of entry, including U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents.

On April 1, CDC announced that as of May 23 the Title 42 public health order will be terminated "to enable DHS time to implement appropriate COVID-19 mitigation protocols, such as scaling up a program to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to migrants and prepare for resumption of regular migration under Title 8."

"After considering current public health conditions and an increased availability of tools to fight COVID-19 (such as highly effective vaccines and therapeutics), the CDC Director has determined that an Order suspending the right to introduce migrants into the United States is no longer necessary," the agency said in a statement. "With CDC's assistance and guidance, DHS has and will implement additional COVID-19 mitigation procedures."

Twenty-one states filed a lawsuit in response claiming that the CDC's move violates the Administrative Procedures Act and would have adverse impacts. A hearing is scheduled for Friday on the states' request for a preliminary injunction to block the administration from stopping use of the Title 42 order.

Acting Assistant Secretary for Border and Immigration Policy Blas Nunez-Neto at DHS' Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans told lawmakers that "migratory surges along our southwest border have, unfortunately, become a regular occurrence over the past decade under presidents of both parties."

"Over this period, we have seen as well fundamental changes to the nature, scope, and demographics of irregular migration, even as our encounters along the border have increased to unprecedented levels this year," he said. "...For decades, the vast majority of individuals encountered at the southwest border were single adults from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Over the past two years, though, we have seen an unprecedented increase in migration from countries we have not traditionally encountered along our southwest border, which accounted for more than half of our unique encounters thus far this year when recidivism is factored in. In fact, roughly 25 percent, a full quarter of our encounters are from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba this year — countries that we generally cannot return people to in large numbers due to the dictatorships that are in power. These changes dramatically affect our ability to efficiently and humanely apprehend, process, and remove migrants encountered at the border. Our system was simply not designed historically to handle these flows."

Nunez-Neto said that despite these challenges DHS "has taken concrete steps since last fall" to prepare for the CDC lifting its Title 42 order.

The plan that was developed rests on six main pillars. The first is surging resources to support border operations. "This includes deploying more than a thousand additional law enforcement personnel to the border, constructing additional soft-sided facilities, and implementing robust public health protocols at the border, including our new vaccination program for migrants processed under Title 8," Nunez-Neto continued.

The second pillar is "increasing the processing efficiency within our border management and immigration systems — this includes really innovative work to create digital A-Files and electronic notices to appear, which will realize substantial savings in time at the border, as well as in en route processing and our Enhanced Central Processing Center model."

The third pillar, Nunez-Neto said, is "our ongoing work to administer consequences for unlawful entry."

“We will and are committed to firmly but fairly enforcing our immigration laws,” he told senators. “And this includes applying expedited removal to all noncitizens who are, in fact, removable. It includes focusing prosecutions on noncitizens whose conduct warrants it, including those who are seeking to evade capture at the border. And it includes our efforts to speed up the asylum system through executive action for those who are not detained through the Asylum Officer Rule and through the Dedicated Docket.”

The fourth pillar is “our ongoing work to bolster NGO capacity and support border communities by working closely with and providing support for NGOs and community stakeholders.” The fifth pillar “involves our efforts to target and disrupt the transnational criminal organizations and the human smugglers who spread misinformation and put migrants in harm’s way for profit.”

And the sixth and final pillar, Nunez-Neto said, “involves our efforts to work regionally and collaborate with our partners in Mexico, as well as throughout the hemisphere, to enhance legal avenues for protection and opportunity throughout the hemisphere but also to ensure that partner governments are, in fact, enforcing their borders and not just letting people pass through on their way north.”

FEMA Region 3 Administrator MaryAnn Tierney, who on April 29 completed her assignment as a senior coordinating official for DHS’ Southwest Border Coordination Center, told senators that the SBCC “has implemented measures to secure additional resources via agreements with other federal agencies and contracts across three lines of effort: transportation, facilities, and personnel.”

“This includes expanding holding ground and air transport capacity, increasing utilization of law enforcement officers from across the federal government, adding contract security guards and processing support staff, and expanding medical services,” she said. “These efforts allow CBP officers and agents to perform their vital national security mission as opposed to processing and other administrative work.”

“Second, the SBCC and Customs and Border Protection field leadership have established recurring and operationally focused engagements with state, local, tribal, and law enforcement officials to share information, understand challenges, and coordinate actions on the ground,” Tierney continued. “Additionally, in April, FEMA awarded \$150 million in humanitarian funding to the National Board for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program. The National Board will award these funds to eligible state and local governments and nonprofit organizations that have aided or will aid individuals and families encountered by DHS at the southern border. These funds can be used for food, lodging, and transportation costs. Organizations will have the opportunity to request reimbursement on a quarterly basis, as well as to request advance funding.”

Third, she said, DHS launched the Southwest Border Technology Integration Program “to digitize and automate noncitizen processing,” which is believed to have saved “over 20,000 hours of agent time already.”

“Today, over 70 percent of Title 8 cases are reviewed and signed digitally by Customs and Border Protection, which saves up to 14 minutes per case,” Tierney said. “...Additional efficiencies are being implemented specifically targeted at expedited removal so noncitizens encountered at the border can be quickly removed. Everything possible is being done to enable officers and agents to spend less time processing arrests and more time in the field.”

“Fourth, the SBCC is rapidly developing and testing innovative models that will co-locate Customs and Border Protection, ICE, HHS, and nongovernmental organizations at enhanced centralized processing centers to eliminate inefficiencies and process noncitizens. This model will allow CBP to swiftly triage noncitizens and encounters based on risk, ensuring that higher-risk individuals are held in secured, hardened facilities and until they are placed in detention pending expedited removal.”

And fifth, Tierney said, the SBCC is working to alleviate overcrowding at CBP facilities by employing mobile en route processing.

“Border Patrol is outfitting buses with necessary technology to support processing noncitizens while in transit. CBP can move noncitizens out of their facilities faster while retaining the integrity of biometric and biographic screening processes and ensuring noncitizens apprehended at the border are placed expeditiously into removal proceedings,” she said. “Ultimately, the goal of these steps and other efforts focused on longer-term strategies to create lasting, scalable, repeatable structures to respond to irregular migration events.”

Customs and Border Protection Acting Chief Operating Officer Benjamin ‘Carry’ Huffman told the committee that CBP “remains the most humanitarian law enforcement agency in the country,” stressing that “our border protection mission and ethos necessitate that we provide lifesaving rescues, shelter, medical treatment, nourishment, and clothing to those we encounter.”

“CBP’s operational response will be, as it is now, grounded in three key principles: first, enforce the law and implement administrative policies; second, ensure individuals in our custody are provided care and afforded rights; and third, work collaboratively with our interagency and private sector partners,” he said.

CBP “will continue to utilize our immigration authorities under Title 8, as we have done throughout our agency’s history,” including “a range of enforcement options to hold individuals accountable for entering the U.S. illegally, including placing individuals in appropriate removal proceedings,” Huffman added.

“They also allow noncitizens appropriate access to make asylum claims and provide for urgent port of entry humanitarian parole on a case-by-case basis, which brings me to our second principle: the commitment to provide care and affording rights to individuals in our temporary custody. From the moment of initial contact with an individual, CBP procedures are designed to identify the correct processing pathway for that person, including appropriate options for those in vulnerable populations.”

CBP is expanding temporary holding capacity, he noted, increasing use of transportation to take migrants away from overcrowded sectors for processing, and providing additional medical resources “to protect the health and safety of migrants and, by extension, our personnel and our communities.”

Stressing the importance of interagency partnerships in the effort, Huffman said that CBP “is making numerous preparations to ensure we can scale our operations as necessary to respond to the areas of greatest need.”

“While I’m here today representing one agency, I cannot stress enough the importance of Congress’ continued support to the missions of not only CBP, but also ICE, USCIS, FEMA, HHS, the Department of State, the Department of Justice, and others. We are all part of a great number of efforts collaborating across the immigration spectrum,” he said.

“As evidenced by all the witnesses present, collaboration is key and support from Congress is vital. The border has always been a dynamic and complex environment. For CBP, we will continue to do our part in enforcing the law, ensuring individuals are properly cared for, and being a trusted partner to all others entities working on this effort.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Controversial SPD officer short suspension</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://publicola.com/2022/05/12/controversial-officer-gets-short-suspension-for-shattering-drivers-window-woodland-park-sweep-houses-four-people-county-councilmember-dunn-votes-no-on-choice/">https://publicola.com/2022/05/12/controversial-officer-gets-short-suspension-for-shattering-drivers-window-woodland-park-sweep-houses-four-people-county-councilmember-dunn-votes-no-on-choice/</a>
GIST	Last month, Seattle’s Office of Police Accountability, which investigates allegations of officer misconduct, dismissed most of a complaint filed by a police lieutenant against SPD officer Andrei Constantin, who deliberately shattered the window of a car parked at a gas station while the driver and a passenger were inside. Of five allegations, including charges of retaliation and dishonesty, the OPA upheld only two—failing to document the smashed window and behaving unprofessionally. As a penalty, Police Chief Adrian Diaz issued an eight-day suspension.

If Constantin's name sounds familiar, that's because this isn't the first time his actions have landed him in the press. In 2020, Constantin was outed as the person allegedly responsible for an [anonymous Twitter account](#) that, among other inflammatory statements, mocked victims of police violence, including George Floyd, promoted violence against protesters, and called for donations to a defense fund for a driver who killed a demonstrator on I-5 in the summer of 2020.

Since that controversy, [police accountability watchdogs](#) have unearthed at least four other OPA complaints against Constantin, many of them containing multiple misconduct allegations, in the last five years. Many of those resulted in referrals for training rather than suspensions or more serious punishment. The complaints identified on the [SPD.watch](#) website, a joint project of DivestSPD and Tech Bloc Seattle, included: Pulling over a driver without justification, pointing a gun at him, and [handcuffing him](#); [threatening to use his Taser](#) on a man who was not being threatening; stopping a homeless Black bike rider and [detaining him for nearly an hour](#) because he wasn't wearing a helmet; and a [use-of-force allegation](#) that the OPA hasn't yet resolved.

According to the OPA report on this latest incident, Constantin saw a car parked at a gas station, ran driver's plates and determined that the title to his car hadn't been transferred when it was sold. When Constantin approached the car, the driver, who was Latino, got back in the car and rolled up the window, according to the report. At that point, Constantin "used a hard object to strike and shatter the driver's side window" while the driver and a passenger were inside. In his own report on the incident, Constantin withheld the fact that he had smashed the person's window.

A [disciplinary action report](#) recommending the suspension noted that Constantin had been disciplined for misconduct twice before. "[Y]ou did not have probable cause to arrest or any basis to engage in a vehicle pursuit. Despite this, you destroyed a community member's property," the report says. "That is an act akin to vandalism done under the purported color of law."

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HEADLINE	05/13 Sweden weighs joining NATO
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/world/europe/sweden-finland-nato-putin.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/world/europe/sweden-finland-nato-putin.html</a>
GIST	<p>TOFTA, Sweden — The Gotland regiment of the Swedish Army was going through its paces, practicing how to use its Swedish-designed lightweight anti-tank missiles, the NLAWs, that are proving so effective in Ukraine.</p> <p>The regiment, which was resurrected in 2018 on this strategic island that helps control the air and naval space of the Baltic Sea, is in the process of rebuilding with the aim of expanding to 4,000 soldiers from the current 400 — still a far cry from the 25,000 that served here during the Cold War.</p> <p>In a major recalculation of its security posture precipitated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sweden is relearning how to be a military power. And pulled along by its strategic partner, Finland, it is about to apply to join NATO, ending more than 200 years of neutrality and military nonalignment.</p> <p>The new commander of the Gotland regiment, Col. Magnus Frykvall, has a clear view of this mission to rebuild Sweden's defenses, as well as the importance of the island his regiment is guarding. "If you own Gotland, you can control sea and air movement in the whole of the south Baltics," he said.</p> <p>To join NATO is a political decision, Colonel Frykvall, 47, said, but he favors it. "Cooperation is one thing, but an alliance is something else," he said. "An alliance means you have guarantees."</p> <p>One of his troops, Pvt. Sara Karlsson, 20, an artillery specialist, said that "every soldier here now feels that we're making a difference, and I feel it in my colleagues too, a new sense of responsibility."</p> <p>The world is dangerous, and there is always a war somewhere, she said. "But Ukraine is not far from Gotland, and we can feel it."</p>

If Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a quiet wake-up call, its bloody, full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February was a five-alarm fire.

"We had our dream and now it's time to wake up," said Robert Dalsjo, director of studies at the Swedish Defense Research Agency. "The dream is ended."

Sentiment in Finland, having fought two wars against the Soviet Union, has swung massively in the last six months in favor of joining NATO, guided by Sauli Niinisto, its president.

Now, nearly 80 percent of Finns support joining, compared with only 20 percent before the war. On Thursday, Mr. Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin made public their support for Finland's application, with a parliamentary vote expected on Monday.

But in Sweden, the debate is more of a psychodrama within the ruling Social Democratic Party, with Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson [ruling out NATO membership](#) for Sweden as late as March 8, after the Russian invasion. But [by mid-April, her position had evolved](#).

"There is a before and after 24 February, the security landscape has completely changed," she said. "Given the situation, we have to really think what is best for Sweden and our peace in this new situation."

The Swedish public has followed along, with 52 percent now favoring joining NATO, especially if Finland joins, up from about 27 percent before the war.

On Sunday, after discussions with members from all 26 of the country's districts, the Social Democrats will announce their decision, said Kenneth G. Forslund, a member of the party executive and chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Relations. The consensus is that the party will reluctantly back joining NATO alongside Finland.

"We and the Finns belong together," said Carl Bildt, a former prime minister. "If we were outside on our own, we would be a 1960s nostalgia museum."

Few analysts in either country doubt that the two countries will apply jointly, and that NATO will rapidly accept. Both Washington and London — Washington quietly, London loudly — have provided bilateral security assurances to both countries while their applications are ratified.

For Sweden and Finland, "times have changed," said Bjorn Fagersten of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. "It's a new normal, a new world."

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Stockholm decided that war was a thing of the past. It removed nearly all of its forces from Gotland, and reduced the national army by around 90 percent and the navy and air force by about 70 percent. It was a decision that a retired colonel, Mats Ekeröth, who runs a military museum on Gotland, dismissed as "absolutely idiotic."

The last time Gotland was invaded was in 1808 — by Russia. The 1,800 Russians were driven off in a month, but, as a parting shot, Russia wrested Finland away from the Swedes. Only six years later, in 1814, Sweden fought its last war.

So Russia has always been a looming presence in the Nordic countries. Russia's fleet in Kaliningrad is only 200 miles away, and so are its Iskander nuclear-capable missiles.

"Suspicion of Russia goes back a long time, some 700 years," said Niklas Granholm, also of the Swedish Defense Research Agency. He added: "This war against Ukraine won't be forgotten for a couple of generations, that this is what Russia is really like."

People were chilled even before the invasion, when President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia warned Sweden and Finland of "retaliation" should they join NATO.

“Putin’s direct threats have had the opposite effect,” said Mr. Dalsjo. “The perceived threat level has really risen,” driving both nations toward joining NATO.

Sweden’s international reputation is one of neutrality, peacekeeping, nuclear disarmament, gender equality and a “feminist foreign policy.” Swedes in general, as Mr. Bildt joked, “consider ourselves the enlightened voice of humanity.”

But its changes are not as sudden as they appear. Even under Olof Palme, whose sharp criticism of the Vietnam War annoyed Washington, Sweden had a working relationship with Moscow but also a close, quiet, bilateral defense relationship with the United States.

It was a secret relationship for many years, known as “the hidden alliance,” though it was revealed to Moscow by a prominent Swedish spy. As Mr. Bildt said, “it was a policy known to the Russians but not to the Swedes.”

Fighting for nuclear disarmament and peace while trying to “build bridges” to Moscow was not contradictory to ensuring Sweden’s ability to defend itself with American and British help.

Indeed, while promoting disarmament, Sweden is quietly one of the world’s largest arms manufacturers per capita, with important companies like Saab, which makes fighter jets, and Bofors, now a part of Britain’s BAE Systems.

Sweden also became a major exporter of arms; in 2021, its arms industry exported \$2 billion worth of weapons despite restrictions on selling to dictatorships or countries at war — Ukraine now being a major exception.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both Sweden and Finland moved closer to the West, dropping neutrality to apply to join the European Union in 1992 and NATO’s Partnership for Peace program in 1994, while remaining militarily nonaligned. Both countries join NATO exercises.

But even if Russia came to consider both countries effectively part of the Western alliance, defense cooperation and assurances are not guarantees — certainly not of the kind provided by NATO’s Article 5, which commits member states to collective defense.

“Basically we were paying the costs but without the benefits of Article 5, and we weren’t fooling Russia,” said Mr. Fagersten. “We were as aligned to NATO as any nonmember could be.”

But the coming decision has caused anguish among many Swedes, worried that membership in a nuclear alliance will limit Sweden’s ability to press for nuclear disarmament, arms control and peaceful resolution of disputes.

“This is not how you build peace and security,” said Gabriella Irsten of the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, which sharply condemns the Russian invasion but opposes NATO membership. “You create security together with your enemy — if your enemy is not secure, you are not.”

Nonalignment has served Sweden well “and kept us safe,” she said, so it seems wrong to dump it now.

“I also feel it would be a loss of our history,” she said. “We worked for so long with a view of how to build peace, and now that’s being thrown into the garbage without real discussion and with all this fear.”

Both the Greens and the Left Party oppose NATO membership for similar reasons.

Marta Stenevi of the Greens said that the Russian invasion meant “a re-evaluation of our positions on defense and security,” but called for better Swedish defense and closer cooperation with NATO rather than membership, “which comes with certain obligations,” like going to war in a crisis it does not choose.



	<p>And then there is the daunting possibility, she said, of a return to power of former President Trump.</p> <p>“We want to actively participate in the crises we choose,” Ms. Stenevi said. “To keep a strong voice for peace and democracy is easier outside the alliance.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Russia shipping traffic remains strong</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/economy/russia-shipping-sanctions.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/economy/russia-shipping-sanctions.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Shipping traffic in and out of Russia has remained relatively strong in the past few months as companies have raced to fulfill contracts for purchases of energy and other goods before the full force of global sanctions goes into effect.</p> <p>With the European Union poised to introduce a ban on Russian oil in the coming months, that situation could change significantly. But so far, data show that while commerce with Russia has been reduced in many cases, it has yet to be crippled.</p> <p>Volumes of crude and oil products shipped out of Russian ports, for example, climbed to 25 million metric tons in April, data from the shipping tracker Refinitiv showed, up from around 24 million metric tons in December, January, February and March, and mostly above the levels of the last two years.</p> <p>Jim Mitchell, the head of oil research for the Americas at Refinitiv, said that Russia’s outgoing shipments in April had been buoyed by the global economic recovery from the pandemic, and that they did not yet reflect the impact of sanctions and other restrictions on Russia issued after its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.</p> <p>Crude oil typically trades 45 to 60 days ahead of delivery, he said, meaning that changes to behavior following the Russian invasion were still working their way through the system.</p> <p>“The volume has been slow to decline, because these were contracts that have already been set,” Mr. Mitchell said. Defaulting on such contracts is “a nightmare for both sides,” he said, adding, “which means that even in the current environment nobody really wants to breach a contract.”</p> <p>Russia has stopped publishing data on its imports and exports since Western governments united to announce their array of sanctions and other restrictions. Exports of oil or gas that leave Russia through pipelines can also be difficult for outside firms to verify.</p> <p>But the global activities of the massive vessels that call on Russian ports to pick up and deliver containers of consumer products or bulk-loads of grain and oil are easier to monitor. Ships are required to transmit their identity, position, course and other information through automatic tracking systems, which are monitored by a variety of firms like Refinitiv, MarineTraffic, Kpler and others.</p> <p>These firms say that shipping traffic was relatively robust in March and April, despite the extraordinary tensions with Russia since its invasion of Ukraine. That reflects both how long some of the sanctions issued by the West are taking to come into effect and an enduring profit motive for trading with Russia, especially after prices for its energy products and commodities have cratered.</p> <p>Data from MarineTraffic, for example, a platform that shows the live location of ships around the world using those on-ship tracking systems, indicates that traffic from Russia’s major ports declined after the invasion but did not plummet. The number of container ships, tankers and bulkers — the three main types of vessels that move energy and consumer products — arriving and leaving Russian ports was down about 23 percent in March and April compared with the year earlier.</p> <p>“The reality is that the sanctions haven’t been so difficult to maneuver around,” said Georgios Hatzimanolis, who analyzes global shipping for MarineTraffic.</p>

Tracking by Lloyd's List Intelligence, a maritime information service, shows similar trends. The number of bulk carriers, which transport loose cargo like grain, coal and fertilizer, that sailed from Russian ports in the five weeks after the invasion was down only 6 percent from the five-week period before the invasion, according to the service.

In the weeks following the invasion, Russia's trade with China and Japan was broadly stable, while the number of bulk carriers headed to South Korea, Egypt and Turkey actually increased, their data showed.

"There's still a lot of traffic back and forth," said Sebastian Villyn, the head of risk and compliance data at Lloyd's List Intelligence. "We haven't really seen a drop."

Those figures contrast somewhat with statements from global leaders, who have emphasized the crippling nature of the sanctions. Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen said on Thursday that the Russian economy was "absolutely reeling," pointing to estimates that it faces a contraction of 10 percent this year and double-digit inflation.

Earlier this week, Ms. Yellen said that the Treasury Department was continuing to deliberate about whether to extend an exemption in its sanctions that has allowed American financial institutions and investors to keep processing Russian bond payments. Speaking at a Senate hearing, she said that officials were actively working to determine the "consequences and spillovers" of allowing the license to expire on May 25, which would likely lead to Russia's first default on its foreign debt in more than a century.

Global sanctions on Russia continue to expand in both their scope and their impact, especially as Europe, a major customer of Russian energy, moves to wean itself off the country's oil and coal. Trade data suggest that shipments into Russia of high-value products like semiconductors and airplane parts — which are crucial for the military's ability to wage war — have plummeted because of export controls issued by the United States and its allies.

But many sanctions have been targeted at certain strategic goods, or exempted energy products — which are Russia's major exports — to avoid causing more pain to consumers at a time of rapid price increases, disrupted supply chains and a growing global food crisis.

So far, Western governments have levied an array of financial restrictions, including banning transactions with Russia's central bank and sovereign wealth fund, freezing the assets of many Russian officials and oligarchs, and cutting off Russian banks from international transactions.

Canada and the United States have already banned imports of Russian energy, and also prohibited Russian ships from calling at their ports, but the countries are not among Russia's largest energy customers.

The European Union, which is a key destination for Russian energy, plans to begin barring Russian coal later this year and is moving toward a ban on Russian oil by the end of the year, although opposition from Hungary has emerged as a recent stumbling block. Britain has also said it will phase out Russian oil imports by the end of the year.

This weekend, after a meeting of the Group of 7 countries, the Biden administration said it would place additional restrictions on the imports obtained by Russia's industrial sector and impose sanctions on seven shipping companies, which together own or operate 69 vessels.

The private market has taken its own measures, with many companies, including in the energy sector, saying they would halt operations in Russia.

More changes could be imminent. Mr. Mitchell of Refinitiv said shipping traffic was likely to further decline in the coming months because of a reluctance from insurers in places like Switzerland and Bermuda to insure vessels that call on Russia. European governments are also discussing bans on shipping and insurance.

And last week, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia signed a decree that would forbid the export of products and raw materials to designated people or entities, the list of which is still being drawn up.

Matt Smith, lead oil analyst for the Americas at Kpler, said Russian crude exports were in fact higher in April, according to their tracking, because sanctions weren't yet in place to deter the buying of Russian crude.

"Russian crude exports are not dropping as people expected," he said.

Flows of Russian crude oil into northwest Europe dropped off somewhat in April, but shipments to Italy and other European countries increased, driven by opportunistic purchases and redirected barrels, he said. And countries like India and Turkey that typically don't import a lot of so-called Urals oil from Russia had "embarked on a spree of bargain hunting and snapped up those barrels at a steep discount," he added.

"So for all intents and purposes, nothing has really changed," Mr. Smith said.

Even if Russia's export volumes drop, rising energy prices could help to offset those losses.

Speaking on Thursday, Ms. Yellen said that a European embargo on Russian energy could have adverse consequences on global energy markets while actually boosting revenues for Russia. Administration officials have had ongoing concerns that embargoes will push up the price of oil globally, allowing Russia to make more money from the places where it continues to sell it. She said that the United States and its allies were examining setting up a "special payments authority" where Russia could get paid for the cost of production on its oil exports while taxes would be redirected for reparations to Ukraine.

In the longer run, as British and European sanctions on Russian energy begin to take effect later this year, Russia is likely to shift its sales to markets outside Europe.

Daniel Yergin, a energy historian and author of "The Prize," said China and India were increasingly on the receiving end for distressed Russian oil that could no longer find a home in Europe.

"Putin always said Russia's future was in Asia — this will really accelerate that shift," he said.

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HEADLINE	05/13 Pressure on China to change zero-Covid
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/china-zero-covid-xi.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/china-zero-covid-xi.html</a>
GIST	<p>As the rest of the world learns to live with Covid-19, China's top leader, Xi Jinping, wants his country to keep striving to live without it — no matter the cost.</p> <p>China won a battle against its first outbreak in Wuhan, Mr. Xi said last week, and "we will certainly be able to win the battle to defend Shanghai," he added, referring to the epicenter of the current outbreak in China.</p> <p>But pressure is mounting for a change to the zero-Covid strategy that has left Shanghai at a standstill since March, kept hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens under lockdown nationwide and is now threatening to bring Beijing to a halt.</p> <p>This week, the World Health Organization called China's current pandemic strategy "unsustainable." An economist summarized it as "zero movement, zero G.D.P." Multinational companies have grown wary of further investments in the country.</p> <p>For more than two years, China kept its Covid numbers enviably low by doggedly reacting to signs of an outbreak with testing and snap lockdowns. The success allowed the Communist Party to boast that it had</p>

prioritized life over death in the pandemic, unlike Western democracies where deaths from the virus soared.

More transmissible variants like Omicron threaten to dent that success, posing a dilemma for Mr. Xi and the Chinese Communist Party. Harsher lockdowns have been imposed to keep infections from spreading, stifling economic activity and threatening millions of jobs. Chinese citizens have grown restless, pushing back against being forced to stay home or to move into grim, government-run isolation facilities.

Yet abandoning the strategy risks a surge in deaths, especially among the country's tens of millions of unvaccinated older people. Researchers this week warned of a "tsunami" of deaths if the virus surged unchecked, leaving China's fragile national hospital system overwhelmed and raising the possibility of social unrest.

Fearing any dissent during a [politically important year](#) for Mr. Xi, China's censors have moved quickly to muffle calls for a change in course on Covid-19. The head of the World Health Organization, whose recommendations China [once held up as a model](#), was silenced this week when he called on the country to rethink its strategy.

Photographs and references to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the W.H.O., were promptly scrubbed from the Chinese internet after the statement. The foreign ministry responded by calling Mr. Tedros's remarks "irresponsible," and accusing the W.H.O. of not having a "proper understanding of the facts."

China's state-controlled media has also glossed over the draconian measures officials have deployed to deal with outbreaks. This week, as some authorities in Shanghai erected new fences around quarantine zones, boarded up more homes and asked residents not to leave their apartments, state media painted a picture of a city slowly returning to normal.

One article described the "hustle and bustle of city life" returning, while another focused on statistics for how many stores had reopened.

But rosy state media reports cannot hide a looming challenge facing Mr. Xi.

To date, the coronavirus has claimed 569 lives and infected more 777, 565 people since March 1, according to official statistics. If unchecked, the outbreak could lead to 112 million infections and nearly 1.6 million deaths between now and July, according to a study from researchers at Fudan University in Shanghai and Indiana University in the United States.

"The situation is pretty grim, and the study shows clearly the huge importance in vaccinating and boosting the elderly," said Marco Ajelli, an infectious disease modeler at Indiana University's School of Public Health, who contributed to the study.

Less than half of people aged 70 or older in Shanghai have received two jabs, according to the study. Across China, the number is 72 percent, a figure that health experts say should be 95 percent or higher. In dozens of cities where there have been outbreaks or partial lockdowns in anticipation of rising cases, resources have been devoted to stamping out the virus rather than to vaccinations.

Currently the vaccines available in China are also not as potent as foreign ones available in other countries. Chinese vaccines use traditional technology that has been shown to be less effective than breakthrough mRNA technology. China said last year that it was close to approving BioNTech, a German mRNA shot made in partnership with Pfizer, but that has not happened. Several Chinese companies are in the testing phase of a homegrown mRNA option, and China also recently approved for emergency use a Covid-19 antiviral pill made by Pfizer called Paxlovid.

Administering three vaccine shots, using antiviral therapies and offering more effective vaccines could help China find a path out of zero Covid, Mr. Ajelli said.

Investors and business leaders worry that China's rigid adherence to its zero-Covid policy could send the economy into free fall. "It is high time for the government to change its strategy," said Fred Hu, a prominent Chinese investor. The benefits of zero Covid no longer outweigh the economic costs, he added. "Sticking to the zero-Covid strategy would decimate its economy and undermine public confidence."

By one estimate, nearly 400 million people in 45 cities have been under some form of lockdown in China in the past month, accounting for \$7.2 trillion in annual gross domestic product. Economists are concerned that the lockdowns will have a major impact on growth; one economist has warned that if lockdown measures remain in place for another month, China could enter into a recession.

European and American multinational companies have said they are discussing ways to shift some of their operations out of China. Big companies that increasingly depend on China's consumer market for growth are also sounding the alarm. Apple said it could see a \$4 billion to \$8 billion hit to its sales because of the lockdowns.

Howard Schultz, the interim chief executive of Starbucks, said the company has "virtually no ability to predict our performance in China."

Foreign investments have nearly dried up, and some projects have been on hold for more than two years because pandemic restrictions have made it essentially impossible for foreign executives to visit China. When executives at multinational companies appeal to senior Chinese officials, their calls are met with silence, said Michael Hart, the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China.

"China has been very steadfast in its views that it has the right strategy and it doesn't want people to criticize it," Mr. Hart said.

Some of China's top leaders have also started to share concerns about the economy. China's premier, Li Keqiang, described the employment situation as "complicated and grave" as migrant workers and college students struggle to find and keep jobs during lockdowns.

Even as daily virus cases in Shanghai are steadily dropping, authorities have tightened measures in recent days following Mr. Xi's call last week to double down. Officials also began to force entire residential buildings into government isolation if just one resident tested positive.

The new measures are harsher than those early on in the pandemic and have been met with pockets of unrest, previously rare in China where citizens have mostly supported the country's pandemic policies.

In one video widely circulated online before it was taken down by censors, an exasperated woman shouts as officials in white hazmat suits smash her door down to take her away to an isolation facility. She protests and asks them to give her evidence that she has tested positive. Eventually she takes her phone to call the police.

"If you called the police," one of the men replies, "I'd still be the one coming."

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HEADLINE	05/12 Putin's war in Ukraine backfires
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/12/how-putins-war-ukraine-has-backfired-spectacularly/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/12/how-putins-war-ukraine-has-backfired-spectacularly/</a>
GIST	<p>ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine was designed to topple the government in Kyiv, fracture NATO and cement Moscow's status as a fearsome 21st-century military machine and an irreplaceable energy kingpin that could use its oil and gas reserves to bully Europe.</p> <p>Less than three months into the war, none of those goals has been met. Instead, Russian President Vladimir Putin's Ukraine gambit has backfired spectacularly across the board, culminating in the</p>

blockbuster announcement Thursday that Finland will abandon 75 years of neutrality and formally apply to join NATO.

Finnish leaders did not mince words when explaining exactly why their nation, which shares an 833-mile border with Russia, is aligning itself with Moscow's No. 1 adversary.

"You caused this. Look in the mirror," Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said this week in comments directed squarely at the Kremlin.

The decision by Finland and a similar announcement from Sweden, expected as soon as this week, represent the exact opposite outcome that Mr. Putin was anticipating. By launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and threatening the West with nuclear war should it intervene, the Russian leader was banking on cracks emerging within NATO. Members of the alliance, he seems to have believed, would disagree about the extent to which they should aid Ukraine militarily, paralyzing the organization and exposing it as a paper tiger incapable of concrete action when it matters most.

The news out of Helsinki has proved Mr. Putin wrong. Not only is NATO set to welcome two new countries but long-standing pillars of the alliance such as Germany also have announced that they will dramatically ramp up defense spending in response to Russia's military campaign in Ukraine.

By directly causing such a military spending boost in Berlin, Mr. Putin's war achieved what U.S. administrations of both parties — including four years of aggressive public cajoling by President Trump — could not. Indeed, Washington has spent years urging Germany and other NATO members to increase defense spending to better prepare Europe for a potential showdown with Russia. Only when Russian tanks rolled across the Ukrainian border did those governments finally make firm commitments.

Mr. Putin also likely believed that Europe would sidestep a confrontation with Russia because of its reliance on Moscow's energy supplies. The Kremlin has a history of using energy as a weapon, and there was reason to believe that Mr. Putin could cut off fuel deliveries to nations that directly aided Ukraine.

Instead, the European Union in March announced an ambitious plan to wean itself off Russian oil and gas. Such a step seemed almost unthinkable just a few months ago, but it's yet another example of the unintended consequences of the Russian invasion.

"We must become independent from Russian oil, coal and gas. We simply cannot rely on a supplier who explicitly threatens us," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in March.

Still, energy independence and NATO expansion do not necessarily mean a more secure Europe, at least not in the short term.

The Russian Foreign Ministry warned Thursday that it will take "retaliatory steps" in reaction to the news of NATO growth. Other top Russian officials warned against NATO, and its soon-to-be member states of Sweden and Finland, ramping up military assistance to Ukraine.

Those officials even warned of a potential nuclear exchange.

"There is always a risk of such conflict turning into a full-scale nuclear war, a scenario that will be catastrophic for all," said Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council.

### **Battlefield blunders**

The Russian military's reputation has suffered arguably the most damage as a result of the campaign in Ukraine. Its February lightning offensive to capture Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, failed within weeks.

Russian troops pulled out of northern Ukraine and have since turned their attention to the disputed Donbas region in the east.

Russian forces have made modest gains in the Donbas in recent weeks by capturing small villages and bombarding key cities such as Mariupol, where an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian fighters remain holed up in the sprawling steel plant. Their refusal to surrender has prevented Moscow from taking full control of the city and establishing a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia forcibly annexed in 2014 and now uses as a key staging ground.

Farther north, Ukrainian forces this week launched a major counteroffensive that pushed Russian troops away from the outskirts of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. Ukrainian military officials say the city is now out of range of Russian artillery.

More broadly, the war has served as a public test for a Russian military previously considered one of the world's most dangerous. Pentagon planning documents for years have classified Moscow as a major player in the 21st-century "great power competition," and the Ukraine conflict was Mr. Putin's chance to show the world what his nation is capable of doing.

Russian forces have failed in a host of arenas. Perhaps most notable, the Russians still have not secured air supremacy over Ukraine, something most observers expected they could accomplish within a matter of days.

"We would not assess that the Russians have air superiority over Ukraine, and we would still assess that the aerospace is contested. And one of the reasons it's contested is because Ukrainians still have a viable air force of their own, and they also have a very effective air defense capability, both short- and long-range air defense capability," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said this week.

"And we know that it's having an impact on Russia because not only do they not have air superiority, but because of the kinds of flight profiles that they're flying," he said. "Most of their sorties never even leave Russian airspace."

The planes that do venture out of Russian airspace seem ill-equipped for the job.

"Almost none of their vehicles contain situational awareness and digital battle management," British Defense Minister Ben Wallace said in a speech this week. "Vehicles are frequently found with 1980s paper maps of Ukraine in them."

"GPS receivers have been found taped to the dashboards of downed Russian SU-34s so the pilots knew where they were, due to the poor quality of their own systems," he said.

Russian tanks haven't fared much better. Social media platforms have been littered with photos of bombed-out Russian vehicles, many of them destroyed by U.S.-made Javelin anti-tank missiles given to the Ukrainian military.

In the early days of the Kyiv campaign, Russian armored columns remained idle for days because they ran out of fuel. Western military observers also have marveled at the Russian military's inability to properly camouflage its vehicles, making them easy targets for Ukrainian gunners.

All of those failures have added up to a stunning scenario in which a Ukrainian victory, once viewed as a pipe dream, now seems realistic. The Russian military's reputation may never fully recover.

"This war is a disaster," Sen. Lindsey Graham, South Carolina Republican, said during an appearance on "Fox News Sunday" this week. "You see the Russian military getting their ass handed to them on the battlefield in Ukraine."



HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Arizona busing migrants to D.C.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/12/arizona-busing-migrants-dc-follows-texas-lead-send/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/12/arizona-busing-migrants-dc-follows-texas-lead-send/</a>
GIST	<p>Arizona has started its own busing campaign to deliver newly arrived illegal immigrants straight to Washington, following in the footsteps of Texas, which pioneered the policy last month.</p> <p>Gov. Doug Ducey announced the move as part of a broader border security crackdown that includes deploying more National Guard troops and working with ranchers and other landowners to try to secure their property from the onslaught of migrants.</p> <p>Mr. Ducey's office confirmed to local news outlets that the first bus arrived Wednesday, carrying 20 people.</p> <p>The governor said he turned to busing because Arizona's communities are overwhelmed by the number of illegal immigrants being caught and released, and they aren't getting much help from the feds.</p> <p>Migrants who are being shipped to Washington volunteered for the trip, meaning it's likely they were already headed to the East Coast anyway. Mr. Ducey's office said they will be fed and will have access to "support" services while on the road.</p> <p>Texas Gov. Greg Abbott pioneered the busing strategy, with the first shipment of illegal immigrants from his state reaching Washington a month ago.</p> <p>Texas has averaged more than a bus a day, with 32 loads so far, totaling 835 migrants, according to the governor's office. All of the migrants volunteered to come. They are being dropped off near the U.S. Capitol.</p> <p>The federal government has sent mixed signals on busing operations.</p> <p>The White House initially mocked Mr. Abbott, saying he was helping migrants reach their final destinations and at Texas taxpayers' expense.</p> <p>But Homeland Security officials said the busing operation was interfering with its efforts to keep track of the migrants.</p> <p>"As individuals await the outcome of their immigration proceedings, they are legally obligated to report in for the next steps in their immigration process and permitted to travel elsewhere. CBP's close partnerships with other government and non-governmental stakeholders are essential to this effort, and to ensuring fairness, order, and humanity in the process," Chris Magnus, commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, said last month.</p> <p>The Border Patrol's Tucson and Yuma sectors, which cover all of Arizona and a sliver of eastern California, tallied nearly 57,000 illegal entry attempts in March, the latest month for which data has been released. That's the highest rate in years.</p> <p>Less than half of those caught were turned back under the Title 42 pandemic border shutdown. Given rates of recidivism and "gotaways" — those who made it in while avoiding capture — it means a majority of illegal crossers were successful.</p> <p>Communities have been so overwhelmed that one city mayor took to piling illegal immigrants into his vehicle and driving them to the airport in Phoenix so they could disperse throughout the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Massive turnout Seattle pro-abortion rally?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3469145/seattles-upcoming-pro-abortion-rights-demonstrations-expect-to-have-tens-of-thousands-turn-out/">https://mynorthwest.com/3469145/seattles-upcoming-pro-abortion-rights-demonstrations-expect-to-have-tens-of-thousands-turn-out/</a>



GIST	<p>Organizations including Planned Parenthood, the Women’s March, and others have called for a National Day of Action on May 14 in response to the potential <i>Roe v. Wade</i> overturn, with a turnout of as many as 10,000 protesters.</p> <p>A student walkout is also expected to take place May 13, followed by an additional rally.</p> <p>“The Saturday rally will likely be massive, with potentially tens of thousands turning out,” the Seattle chapter of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) wrote in a press release. “It’s important that we, as Seattle DSA, be there visibly, in mass, to stand against this right-wing assault and to build the socialist feminist wing of the movement by popularizing socialist feminist demands, which includes calling for a million person march on the Supreme Court in June.”</p> <p>Students from RiseUp4AbortionRights, Refuse Fascism, Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights, Socialist Alternative, and Students for a Democratic Society held a student walk out at the University of Washington May 5 to rally for pro-abortion rights.</p> <p>Seattle DSA’s goals go beyond defending <i>Roe v. Wade</i>, as the demonstration will also be focused on ending the filibuster and expanding the Supreme Court.</p> <p>Retired Police Sergeant Betsy Smith believes a different police strategy will need to be implemented if Antifa becomes involved with the protests.</p> <p>“I mean, what you’re seeing, and this is typical of Antifa, is that they are going to take advantage of any situation that they can to wreak havoc and to be, as they love to say, ungovernable,” Smith tells the <a href="#">Jason Rantz Show</a> on KTTH. “And so now we’ve got this really mistaken situation of thinking <i>Roe v. Wade</i> is going to going to be overturned.”</p> <p>In 2020, Seattle faced a series of demonstrations between protestors and police, which included members of Antifa, leading to the formation of the Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP) area. Police abandoned the precinct in the area for 24 days.</p> <p>Smith pleads for everyone to “understand the whole Constitution,” and the decision for the Supreme Court to make abortions a state’s issue, in her opinion, will be beneficial long term.</p> <p>“We’re talking about the 10th Amendment, that the states need to make these decisions. And just like you said, in Washington State, abortion is not going to go away,” Smith said. “And the people of the state are going to make those decisions. So why do we need to wreak havoc in Seattle, and the surrounding area, because we’re upset about what the Supreme Court may decide to send back to the States.”</p> <p>Smith, a 29-year police veteran, is currently the spokesperson for the National Police Association.</p> <p>The King County Sheriff’s Office has 113 commissioned vacancies and 59 vacancies for professional staff members. The Seattle Police Department is also facing significant staffing issues, as it looks to hire 125 officers this year.</p> <p>According to Chief Adrian Diaz, more than 350 officers have left the department over the last two years.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/12 WA WIC warns against DIY baby formula
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3469879/baby-formula-shortage-wic/">https://mynorthwest.com/3469879/baby-formula-shortage-wic/</a>
GIST	<p>Like the rest of the country, Washington is undergoing a major baby formula shortage.</p> <p>Pandemic-related supply chain disruptions had already been causing shortages for formula, but the issue was exacerbated in February when Abbott Nutrition issued a national recall for three brands of formula and shut down its Michigan plant over formula contamination. Two babies died and two others were hospitalized with <a href="#">Cronobacter</a> bacterial infections after consuming formula made at the plant.</p>

“Here in Washington, it hit us hard. We have about 18,000 babies who use formula made by that company that was part of the recall,” said Paul Throne, director of the state’s [Washington Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program](#). The WIC Program provides food, nutrition education, health services, and more to families in need across the state.

Then there are the thousands of babies who are not part of the WIC Program.

“We think about an equal number of kids who aren’t on WIC probably were also affected by the recalled formula,” Throne said.

While breastfeeding is “the best way to feed an infant if the family can breastfeed,” Throne said many families cannot breastfeed, or at least cannot exclusively breastfeed, due to health conditions. In his position as WIC director, he sees the lengths parents who rely on formula are going to feed their children.

“The struggle is very real. We hear reports of people going from town to town, store to store, and even going from county to county before they can find the infant formula that’s right for their child,” Throne said.

One of these lengths, however, is too far. Throne said that some people online are sharing information on how to make DIY baby formula at home with ingredients like evaporated milk.

“It might be tempting to try to make formula at home, but it is extremely discouraged,” Throne said. “And the reason is, we cannot make formula in our own kitchens that actually contains all the nutrients a baby needs, and we can’t make it under sterile conditions.”

After all, the Abbott formula was recalled in the first place because of a lack of cleanliness. [According to the CDC](#), cronobacter can get into formula at home, from surfaces like counters.

Parents who are not able to find their usual formula should contact their baby’s doctor to see if there is another brand that might work in its place for their baby’s individual needs.

“Some formulas do have good substitutes that are easy to find, and some of them are very special and it’s not quite as easy to find a different one that would work,” he said. “Definitely talk to your child’s health care provider and see what they recommend.”

People in the WIC program are urged to call their local WIC clinic, and those not in the WIC Program should contact WIC at 1-800-322-2588 to [see if they qualify](#).

“We serve almost a quarter of a million people in Washington every year on the WIC Program, and there are still more that could be served that just don’t know about it,” Throne said, adding, “It’s also important for people to know that WIC is something they may be eligible for, even if they haven’t thought of it before, or maybe they assumed that they weren’t eligible.”

Then there is the issue of people not buying the formula that actually is on the shelves, because they are nervous about formula from Abbott. Throne wants people to remember that formula on the shelves is safe, as it is not the same lot numbers that were recalled.

“One of the best things people can do is help spread the word that formula is safe — if it’s on the shelf, it’s an approved product,” Throne said.

Throne says the shortage should get better as Abbott works to get back on track. [The federal government is also working with](#) other formula companies on increasing output and with foreign countries about possibly importing more formula.

HEADLINE	05/13 Surge diesel prices hits drivers, deliveries
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/record-diesel-prices-pressure-european-drivers-u-s-deliveries-11652416873?mod=hp_lead_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/record-diesel-prices-pressure-european-drivers-u-s-deliveries-11652416873?mod=hp_lead_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>An extended surge in diesel prices is challenging Wall Street bets that inflation is easing.</p> <p>A global shortfall of the fuel—the workhorse for much of the world economy—is straining <a href="#">industries from trucking to farming</a> and adding to the pressure consumers face from higher energy prices. Europe, dependent on imports of Russian diesel that are expected to slump because of sanctions, is particularly vulnerable.</p> <p><a href="#">Motorists and businesses</a> are feeling the pinch. In the U.S., national average retail diesel prices rose to an all-time high for a 14<sup>th</sup> straight day Thursday, reaching \$5.557 a gallon, according to AAA. They have shot up 56% in 2022, outstripping gains in the benchmark price for crude oil. Retail unleaded gasoline prices have risen 34% to \$4.4177 a gallon.</p> <p>Diesel is used in the U.S. mostly in trucks, which means higher prices add to <a href="#">shipping and delivery costs</a>.</p> <p>Inventories of distillates, which also include heating oil, fell recently to a 17-year low in the midst of lower refining activity and higher demand domestically and abroad, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Supplies are particularly <a href="#">tight along the East Coast</a>, where inventories have dropped to their lowest level since at least 1990.</p> <p><a href="#">In Europe, where diesel cars</a> account for a bigger chunk of the auto fleet, prices in the wholesale market have leapt 88% over the past year. The availability of fuel is likely to worsen as sanctions on Russia tighten, exposing a flaw in the region’s energy setup.</p> <p>Governments in recent decades pushed drivers to adopt diesel cars but didn’t upgrade the refinery industry so it could produce the fuel in greater quantities. That meant buying more diesel from Russia, the energy superstore on Europe’s doorstep.</p> <p>Helge Ippendorf, chief executive of Via Logistik GmbH, a company based near the German city of Cologne that trucks artwork, road-safety materials and other wares, is shelling out 4,000 euros, the equivalent of \$4,150, a week for diesel, 80% more than a year ago. He can’t remember such a jump in fuel prices since the 1970s oil shocks.</p> <p>“No other impact in my whole career—and I started my own company in 1981—was as massive as the situation at the moment,” he said.</p> <p>Rising energy prices are a major factor contributing to the persistence of inflation, which has sparked steep declines in the stock and bond markets. The S&amp;P 500 fell 1.6% Wednesday after a gauge of <a href="#">U.S. consumer prices</a> came in higher than Wall Street expected.</p> <p>The winners are petroleum refiners, which convert crude into usable fuels and are enjoying a rare stretch of profitability. Shares of <a href="#">Valero Energy Corp. VLO -0.01%</a> and <a href="#">Marathon Petroleum Corp. MPC 0.85%</a>, two of the biggest U.S. refining companies, have gained 60% and 45% this year, making them the second- and ninth-best performers on the S&amp;P 500, respectively.</p> <p>Global stockpiles of refined oil products including diesel have fallen to precariously low levels, the International Energy Agency said Thursday. Shortages are starting to crimp mobility in several African countries, Yemen and Sri Lanka. Jet fuel has run low in Mexico, according to the intergovernmental organization.</p> <p>The diesel crunch is another result of the stop-start trajectory of Western economies since the start of the pandemic. When the U.S. and Europe went into hibernation in 2020, energy demand tanked. Several struggling refineries, including Gunvor Group’s facility in Belgium and <a href="#">Shell PLC’s</a> in Convent, La., shut their doors.</p>

Those closures are limiting the ability of refiners to crank up production now that demand is thawing as cars return to the road and planes to the sky. The problem is more acute in diesel than in gasoline because [diesel and jet fuel](#) are produced from the same slice of the crude barrel. When refiners started to spit out jet fuel to meet demand from airlines last year, diesel production sputtered and supplies fell.

The [war in Ukraine](#) is making matters worse. Daily Russian exports of oil products have fallen by 400,000 barrels this year because some companies are [shunning Russian energy](#), according to analysts at Bank of America.

China has excess refining capacity. But lower export quotas for oil products have cut Chinese exports of gasoline, jet fuel and diesel by 400,000 barrels a day since 2020, the analysts added.

Profit margins for refiners in the West have ballooned as traders try to encourage the industry to ratchet up production. Executives on recent earnings calls said they were running at full speed and, in some cases, seeking to maximize output by postponing maintenance.

“I don’t see any significant slack in the system in the U.S.,” said Gary Cunningham, director at Tradition Energy.

In Europe, imports of diesel from Russia are expected to drop starting May 15, when sanctions that crimp the business that trading companies can do with the state-aligned [Rosneft Oil Co.](#) take effect. A full embargo on Russian oil imports into the European Union is subject to tough negotiations.

Eastern Germany is at risk, said Koen Wessels, senior associate for oil products at Energy Aspects. The region’s biggest refinery, Schwedt, is majority-owned by Rosneft and geared up to run on Russian oil imported through the Druzhba pipeline. Output is due to fall as the facility stops using Russian crude. Though some crude from non-Russian producers is expected to arrive via the Polish port of Gdansk, there is no pipeline that can reliably supply the refinery with crude from western Germany if a shortage emerges.

Mr. Wessels said Europe could be drawn into bidding wars with other economies to import diesel from such producers as India and Saudi Arabia.

One industry feeling the heat is agriculture, which relies on diesel to fuel tractors and dry crops, and is also facing a historic rise in fertilizer prices. Jack Watts, an official at the U.K.’s National Farmers’ Union, said some suppliers had told farms that they could order diesel but would be quoted a price only once the fuel was delivered.

“In a lot of cases, farmers have ordered diesel but have no idea what they are going to be paying for it,” he said. “We’ve never seen such concern about pricing and availability.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 FDA to import more baby formula</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/fda-to-import-more-baby-formula-amid-shortage">https://www.q13fox.com/news/fda-to-import-more-baby-formula-amid-shortage</a>
GIST	<p>As a nationwide infant formula shortage continues, President Joe Biden announced steps Thursday that the federal government will take to try and ease the shortfall.</p> <p>According to the White House, the government will make it easier for companies to import formula from overseas, push states to crack down on price gouging, and temporarily relax some of the product requirements for WIC users.</p> <p>The shortage is the result of a variety of factors, including pandemic-related manufacturing and supply chain issues. But it has been exacerbated by a safety recall that followed the deaths of two infants.</p>

Back in February, the Food and Drug Administration warned consumers to avoid some powdered baby formula products from a Sturgis, Michigan, facility run by Abbott Nutrition, which then initiated a voluntary recall. According to findings released in March by federal safety inspectors, Abbott failed to maintain sanitary conditions and procedures at the plant.

Abbott said in a statement that the recall involved four complaints about an environmental bacteria found in infants who consumed formula from the plant. Two infants became sick, while two died.

"After a thorough review of all available data, there is no evidence to link our formulas to these infant illnesses," the company insisted.

Abbott said that pending FDA approval, "we could restart the site within two weeks." The company would begin by first producing EleCare, Alimentum and metabolic formulas and then start production of Similac and other formulas. Once production began, it would take six weeks to eight weeks for the baby formula to be available on shelves.

Abbott is the largest manufacturer of infant formula in the country.

According to the White House, the United States normally produces 98 percent of the infant formula it consumes, but until the Abbot plant is back online, the FDA will announce steps to import more formula from countries like Mexico, Chile, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

Baby formula has become scarce on store shelves as the U.S. now faces more shortages amid supply chain backlogs.

The president also discussed with executives from Gerber and Reckitt how they could increase production and how his administration could help, and talked with leaders from Walmart and Target about how to restock shelves and address regional disparities in access to formula, the White House said.

"We recognize that this is certainly a challenge for people across the country, something the president is very focused on and we're going to do everything we can to cut red tape and take steps to increase supply," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.

On Tuesday, the FDA said it was working with U.S. manufacturers to increase their output and streamlining paperwork to allow more imports. The agency noted that supply chain issues associated with the pandemic were part of the problem and that consumers bought more baby formula in April than in the month before the recall.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said this week that the FDA was "working around the clock to address any possible shortages."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Concern: Covid hospitalizations rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/washington-doctors-concerned-over-rise-in-covid-hospitalizations">https://www.q13fox.com/news/washington-doctors-concerned-over-rise-in-covid-hospitalizations</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - On the path forward and out of the pandemic, the line looks a little blurry as COVID cases continue to rise in Western Washington, and local doctors are sounding the alarm as hospitalizations are on the rise.</p> <p>Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington, Dr. John Lynch, says this surge is due to two things; a highly infectious variant and the fact so many of us have let our guard down as the mask mandate has ended.</p> <p>"This is not going anywhere and we're going to still continue to need to wrestle with it," Lynch said. As a country, we're steadily approaching 1 million deaths due to COVID. Lynch says the aftermath of the virus is far greater.</p>

	<p>"Far more people died due to COVID-19 than a million people-- [it's] just that that's a million people we can attribute it to up very clearly," Lynch said.</p> <p>It also doesn't capture the number of people still suffering from the aftereffects, long COVID and other serious outcomes due to the infection.</p> <p>Locally and regionally, he is concerned with the increase we're seeing now.</p> <p>"Unfortunately, this has translated into increasing hospitalizations just recently, the death rate is starting to increase just a little bit as well, which hadn't for a couple of months," Lynch said.</p> <p>Indicators he says are going in the wrong direction with no peak in sight.</p> <p>Our positivity rate is at 20%, very high, historically, according to Patrick Mathias with the Department of Laboratory Medicine and pathology at UW Medicine, but the number could be far greater and going unreported due to at-home testing.</p> <p>"It's harder for us to predict multiple weeks from now what kind of resource limitations we might have on the hospital side in terms of ICU beds or hospital beds if we don't see those cases earlier," Mathias said.</p> <p>Even more alarming, fall and winter as 100 million COVID infections are predicted.</p> <p>"I think we have to prepare for that because we could have new variants," Lynch said.</p> <p>Another red flag is the hospital system – which is already stressed – while critical care for COVID patients is not being seen, at the time, doctors do warn the new numbers impact clinic visits and access to treatment.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Russia troops pull back from Kharkiv</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/13/world/russia-ukraine-war-news">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/13/world/russia-ukraine-war-news</a>
GIST	<p>Moscow is withdrawing forces from around Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, where it has been losing ground, Ukrainian and Western officials say, in one of Russia's biggest setbacks since its retreat from Kyiv last month.</p> <p>Officials say the Kremlin will probably <a href="#">redirect troops to the southeast</a>, where it is said to be bolstering its forces in Izium, a city it captured last month. Izium, about two hours southeast of Kharkiv, has become a crucial operations center for Russia, which is said to be making gains in the eastern Donbas region, where fighting has been relentless.</p> <p>One of President Vladimir V. Putin's stated war aims — stopping NATO expansion — became an even more remote possibility on Thursday as Finland's leaders declared unequivocally <a href="#">that it would join the alliance</a>. Sweden is likely to be next. Russian officials said they would consider the countries' entry into NATO a security threat.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Africa vaccine factory: not a single order</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/12/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#south-africa-covid-vaccine-factory">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/12/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#south-africa-covid-vaccine-factory</a>
GIST	<p>JOHANNESBURG — The first factory in Africa licensed to produce Covid-19 vaccines for the African market has not received a single order and may shut down that production line within weeks if the situation doesn't change, according to executives of the company, Aspen Pharmacare.</p>



The factory, in the coastal South African city of Gqeberha, formerly known as Port Elizabeth, was celebrated as a solution to the continent's unequal access to vaccines when it announced a deal to start manufacturing Covid vaccines in November of 2021.

But no purchasers have appeared, as the slow distribution of vaccines in Africa has left health agencies with a backlog of supplies. Commercial production never started, in what officials say is an ominous sign for other African countries that had considered manufacturing Covid-19 vaccines.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, many African countries have lagged far behind much of the world in getting their people vaccinated — and some countries have had difficulty distributing what doses they did get.

Less than 20 percent of the total population in Africa is fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. Officials and politicians blamed wealthy countries for hoarding vaccine doses when vaccines first became available. Countries reliant on donations of vaccines were at the back of the line. Building the capacity to manufacture vaccine doses in Africa was billed as a solution to this vaccine inequity as well as a way to prepare for future pandemics.

South African drug maker Aspen Pharmacare was lauded when it signed a deal with Johnson & Johnson in November last year that would allow it to produce and market the single-dose vaccine as Aspenovax. The vaccine, identical to the one created by Johnson & Johnson, was intended for the African market.

But the initial enthusiasm has not led to purchases, for complicated reasons.

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa, speaking on Thursday at a global summit on the pandemic organized by the White House, blamed “international agencies” for failing to buy vaccines from a pioneering African manufacturer.

“This immediately just devalues the whole process of local manufacturing and local production of vaccines. This, ladies and gentlemen, must change,” Mr. Ramaphosa said.

Gavi, an international nonprofit agency that manages vaccine purchasing deals for low-income countries through the Covax alliance, said in a statement that under its existing contract with Johnson & Johnson, the company has provided vaccines from sources of its choosing. Of the nearly 450 million vaccine doses Gavi has shipped to Africa, 28 percent have been the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, second only to Pfizer-BioNTech's, at 30 percent.

Gavi said in the statement: “Covax is still under contract with J & J and we would be very happy for any doses that we are still expecting to be supplied by Aspen. We have communicated this to J & J. However, again this is solely a decision that rests with J & J.”

But given the unpredictable demand for Covid vaccines in Africa, Gavi also said, it could not guarantee that it would be in a position to purchase directly from Aspenovax in the coming year.

Vaccine procurement contracts are protected by nondisclosure agreements that have made the process opaque.

Johnson & Johnson has not yet responded to a request for comment.

U.S. regulators have restricted use of the Johnson & Johnson shot, preferring the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines instead. But recent evidence suggests that over time, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is preventing infections and illnesses about as effectively as the others, and may prove to offer more durable protection.

Gavi said the U.S. regulators' limitation would not discourage it from purchasing the single-dose vaccine if demand increased. Adenovirus-based vaccines like Johnson & Johnson's do not need below-freezing

storage like the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, both mRNA vaccines. That makes it an attractive choice in countries that lack the needed medical infrastructure, the nonprofit added.

Stavros Nicolaou, Aspen's head of strategic trade development, said that if there are no orders in the next six weeks, Aspen plans to repurpose the sterile production line to produce anesthetics and other drugs. The company said it feared that not all of the 500 staffers trained to produce vaccines could be redirected to other manufacturing lines.

"That good will" that accompanied the initial launch, said Mr. Nicolaou, has "not been matched with orders from the multilateral procurement agencies."

In talks with multilateral agencies, Aspen was hoping orders would roll in at the beginning of 2022, in time for it to start producing commercial batches of the Aspenovax vaccine by the end of March.

But by then agencies had already secured enough vaccines from other sources to begin large-scale vaccination drives. Those efforts were hobbled by logistical and other issues that slowed vaccinations, leaving the continent with a glut of doses that is ongoing.

Recent studies found that more than two-thirds of Africans had already had a Covid infection before the Omicron wave, but reported death rates remain among the lowest in the world. That, combined with the lengthy wait for vaccines, has driven down demand and it remains low. Some public health officials advocate scaling back large-scale vaccination efforts and focusing instead on the most vulnerable groups.

As a result, the African Union and agencies like Covax have not placed new orders in recent months with other manufacturers either.

"Our disappointment remains that Aspen's capacity has been known for quite some time and we would have liked to be scheduled in the procurement process," said Mr. Nicolaou.

Aspen's vaccine "came very late in the process," said Dr. Abdou Salam Gueye, director of emergency preparedness and response for the W.H.O.'s Africa region. The global health agency and its partners have shifted their focus to delivering vaccines to patients, rather than procuring additional vaccine doses, he added.

Unicef, which is the largest single vaccine buyer in the world, said the South African-made vaccines had yet to go through all the W.H.O. approvals.

"The Aspen products have not yet received an 'Emergency Use Listing' from W.H.O. and cannot be procured by UNICEF until that is in place," said Gisela Henrique, Unicef's deputy director of supply division.

Dr. John Nkengasong, the outgoing head of the African Union's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, recalled a 2021 summit where thousands participated in a Zoom call to pledge to build up Africa's vaccine manufacturing.

Dr. Nkengasong, who said he has been in talks with Aspen as well as with African leaders to find a solution, described the lack of orders as "very worrying," adding that it would discourage other African companies from developing the capacity to manufacture Covid-19 vaccines.

"If those companies are not supported, the whole pronouncement and commitment that we all made at the height of this pandemic would really not have been translated into facts," he said.

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HEADLINE	05/12 Bullet center of contention journalist killing
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/world/middleeast/journalist-killed-palestine-israel-bullet.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/world/middleeast/journalist-killed-palestine-israel-bullet.html</a>



JERUSALEM — The bullet that killed the Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on Wednesday has become a central point of contention in the competing efforts by Israelis and Palestinians to investigate who shot her.

The Palestinian Authority on Thursday declined a request to let Israeli officials examine the bullet that killed [Ms. Abu Akleh, a prominent reporter](#) for Al Jazeera who was [killed in the occupied West Bank](#) during an Israeli raid.

The authority said it would investigate Ms. Abu Akleh's death independently, rejecting Israeli calls for a joint inquiry and for the bullet to be assessed in an Israeli laboratory under international supervision.

Palestinian officials and witnesses accused Israeli soldiers of killing Ms. Abu Akleh, dismissing Israeli claims that the journalist may have been hit by Palestinian fire during a shootout in Jenin, a city in the northern West Bank.

Palestinian leaders said that Israel could not be trusted to investigate the killing, while Israeli officials said that the Palestinians had refused to provide the bullet in order to hide the truth.

The standoff came as thousands of Palestinians from all realms of society gathered in the courtyard of the Palestinian Authority's presidential headquarters on Thursday to eulogize and bid farewell to a trailblazing journalist. Mourners included those who had worked alongside Ms. Abu Akleh, those she had interviewed and those whose homes she had entered via the television screen. Palestinian Christian and Muslim clerics converged as well.

"This crime cannot pass without punishment," Mahmoud Abbas, the authority's president, said in an address in front of her coffin.

"We reject a joint investigation with the Israeli state, because it is the one that committed this crime, and because we don't trust them, and we will go immediately to the International Criminal Court to pursue the criminals," he added.

As the mourners followed her coffin out of the courtyard, many chanted her name as others shared their memories of Ms. Abu Akleh — even if from afar.

"When we saw that Shireen had been assassinated, we all felt it, in every Palestinian home," said Thuraya Elayan, a 66-year-old Ramallah resident. "The bullet didn't just kill Shireen — the bullet killed a piece of all of us. She was a symbol, and she lived inside all of our homes."

The bullet has become the focus of two competing narratives about the circumstances of her death. Witnesses said Ms. Abu Akleh was shot by Israeli soldiers in an area of Jenin where there were no Palestinian gunmen. But Israeli military officials said she was shot during a shootout between Israelis and Palestinians, and that she had been in the vicinity of a Palestinian armed with an assault rifle.

Video from the scene did not show the moment when the bullet hit Ms. Abu Akleh, or who fired it.

Both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants involved in the Jenin clashes were carrying M16 assault rifles, guns that use the same 5.56-millimeter bullets, Israeli officials said.

While that fact could complicate efforts to determine who fired the fatal shot, a bullet can still be matched to the gun that fired it.

Each bullet bears microscopic marks specific to the weapon that discharged it, like a signature, said Lior Nadivi, an Israeli forensic ballistics expert.

That means the bullet could reveal whether or not it was fired from a rifle used by an Israeli soldier involved in the raid, according to Mr. Nadivi and two Israeli military officials.

Palestinian officials have conducted an initial autopsy of Ms. Abu Akleh's body, but have yet to release its findings. A spokeswoman for the Palestinian Authority's public prosecutor's office said that it was still awaiting the results of the forensic tests on the bullet.

But Mr. Nadivi, a former firearms examiner in the Israeli police weapons laboratory, said he did not believe the Palestinian Authority had the capability to carry out such an examination. Only the Israelis could confirm or rule out whether one of their rifles was the source of the fatal fire, Mr. Nadivi said.

A senior Israeli military official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with military rules, said that the Israeli Army was ready to assess the guns it used in the raid, if it was provided with the bullet.

Israeli officials said they would be willing to examine the bullet in the presence of a representative of the Palestinian Authority and the United States.

But Israeli and Palestinian rights campaigners were skeptical that Israel would rigorously investigate itself, based on its track record.

"The bullet can help only if the soldiers have surrendered their guns immediately," said Michael Sfard, a legal adviser to Yesh Din, a rights group that investigates Israeli abuses in the West Bank. "Otherwise they could manipulate their guns."

Besides, Mr. Sfard said, there were many other ways in which Israel could investigate the shooting without having the bullet — including by examining video recorded by Israeli military drones that typically accompany Israeli soldiers during such raids.

"The bottom line is that justice from the military authorities is a kind of miracle," Mr. Sfard said. "They do happen once in a blue moon but we haven't had one for a very long time."

An Israeli military official said that two hours after the shooting, the military brought in all the soldiers who were at the scene for debriefing and gathered all the video footage from the cameras they used during the raid.

Beyond that, Israeli officials, like the Palestinian Authority, have released few details of their investigation.

A veteran and widely admired journalist for Al Jazeera, the Qatari-owned news channel, Ms. Abu Akleh was shot after arriving in Jenin to cover clashes between Palestinian militants and the Israeli military. Israeli soldiers have conducted regular raids in Jenin since March, after several fatal attacks on Israelis by Palestinian residents of the area.

She and several other journalists at the scene were wearing blue flak jackets and helmets marked with the word "Press," and her colleagues believe she was deliberately targeted. Israeli officials said she might have been killed during crossfire, by either Palestinian or Israeli forces.

At her funeral procession on Thursday, many people held up posters with a picture of Ms. Abu Akleh in a blue press protective vest — much like the one she was wearing when she was shot — and the words "The coverage will continue."

As the coffin holding her body was carried through Ramallah, people chanted, "With our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice for you, Shireen."

One woman tried shouting a more nationalistic chant: "With our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice for you, Palestine." But no one else joined in.

This moment was for Ms. Abu Akleh.

	<p>Mr. Abbas awarded her the Star of Jerusalem, also known as the Quds Star. One of the highest honors the Palestinian president can bestow, it is traditionally awarded to ministers, ambassadors and members of Parliament.</p> <p>He described Ms. Abu Akleh as a “martyr for truth and for the free word.”</p> <p>After his remarks, Ms. Abu Akleh’s coffin was carried into a waiting ambulance to be taken to Jerusalem, where a family funeral will be held on Friday. She is due to be buried in a Christian cemetery, next to her mother and near her father.</p> <p>Salma Dideen, 6, was among the crowd in Ramallah. She sat on her uncle’s shoulder, wearing a blue frilly dress, holding a poster of Ms. Abu Akleh and mouthing some of the chants.</p> <p>When asked why she had wanted to attend, she said in a voice barely audible above the chants, “Because Shireen was martyred.”</p> <p>Salma’s uncle, Mahmoud Hussein, 30, expanded on the sentiment.</p> <p>“We are here as solidarity with Shireen,” he said. “She is a daughter of the nation. She always put herself in danger just to convey the stories of Palestinians.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Lawsuit: Amazon violated state laws</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/shareholder-amazons-astronomical-misuse-of-customer-data-could-ruin-company/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/shareholder-amazons-astronomical-misuse-of-customer-data-could-ruin-company/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Taking a new approach to bringing attention to how Amazon uses individuals’ data, a shareholder is suing Jeff Bezos, Andy Jassy and 17 other Amazon leaders he claims knowingly allowed the company to violate state laws.</p> <p>Amazon has already come under fire for how its uses biometric data, things like fingerprints and facial images. It’s been accused of collecting and using individuals’ images without their consent as well as violating state laws that prohibit companies from profiting off individuals’ biometric data.</p> <p>Usually, legal actions are targeting the company. This time, shareholder Stephen Nelson’s lawsuit is aimed at Amazon’s top decision makers, on behalf of the company itself.</p> <p>The group of defendants – which includes executives like founder and Executive Chairman Bezos; CEO Jassy; Chief Financial Officer Brian Olsavsky; and General Counsel David Zapolsky, as well as all 11 members of the board of directors – knowingly allowed Amazon to make false statements about its use of biometric data, Nelson alleges in the lawsuit filed in a U.S. District Court in Seattle in April. Company higher-ups, his attorneys claim, “made a conscious choice to turn a blind eye to Amazon’s conduct.” Amazon executives and board members “caused substantial financial and reputational harm to Amazon,” the lawsuit reads.</p> <p>Amazon did not return requests for comment on the lawsuit.</p> <p>Amazon, like many tech companies, uses biometric data to offer customers the features they’ve come to expect. Its Alexa virtual assistant uses voice recognition to answer user questions about the weather. A new feature for the Echo Show 15 device announced in September allows Alexa to use visual cues to identify an individual when they walk into view of the camera and offer a personalized to-do list, calendar and music selection.</p>

Amazon Web Services, the cloud computing arm of the business, stores some biometric data from its customers and those customers' employees, according to the lawsuit, like fingerprints to gain access to a building, voiceprints to identify callers and face scans from gamers.

Amazon launched its facial recognition service, Rekognition, in 2016 for customers to build "powerful visual search and discovery" into applications, according to a blog post on its website. Since then, it has been used in Amazon's smart home systems, Alexa and other camera devices, and Amazon has marketed the technology to law enforcement and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Rekognition has raised alarm bells for activists and shareholders, who say the facial surveillance tech could "unfairly and disproportionately" target people of color. Amazon shareholders will vote on a proposal at the company's annual meeting May 25 to request a report on how Rekognition is used and marketed, and the extent to which it could violate privacy and civil rights.

In the summer of 2020, Amazon put a one-year moratorium on the sale and use of Rekognition by law enforcement.

In a statement urging shareholders to vote against that proposal, Amazon's board of directors said the company is "committed to the responsible use of our artificial intelligence and machine learning products and services."

In response to growing concerns about how and where biometric data was being used, Illinois passed legislation in 2008 to establish guidelines for how companies and other entities could use an individual's information. Those guidelines require companies to get consent before collecting data and to tell individuals, in writing, what information is being collected, why and for how long.

Washington passed a similar law in 2017, and roughly 20 states now have some safeguards in place.

Since those laws went into effect, tech companies including Amazon, Microsoft, Google, TikTok and Meta have faced litigation for allegedly misusing individuals' biometric data. This month, facial recognition startup Clearview AI [agreed to restrict the use](#) of its massive collection of face images following a two-year lawsuit that alleged it collected people's photos without their consent.

Amazon is facing at least 14 class action lawsuits and 75,000 individual cases, according to Nelson's court filing.

With legal fees and potential fines to come, Nelson is arguing Amazon's executives and board of directors are liable for the consequences of those lawsuits. The potential damages are "astronomical to the point the company could be put out of business if the violations are not immediately addressed, stopped and remedied," the lawsuit reads.

Nelson is accusing Amazon's decision makers of misleading investors about the financial and legal risks associated with its use of biometric data and potential violations to Illinois' Biometric Privacy Information Act. Faced with its own class action lawsuit, Facebook [agreed to pay \\$650 million](#) in February 2021 over the company's use of facial recognition technology.

In legal filings, Amazon's board of directors dismissed shareholder concerns about the risks, the lawsuit alleges, and defendants listed in the complaint signed off on "false statements" about Amazon's compliance with state laws.

The defendants' conduct "jeopardizes and harms one of Amazon's most important (and fragile) assets: consumer trust," the lawsuit reads. "Reputational damage is particularly devastating for technology companies like Amazon."

Nelson declined to comment through his lawyer, Gregory Wesner of Herman Jones, based in Bainbridge Island.

	<p>The lawsuit is asking the court to direct Amazon to change its biometric data practices, as well as how it governs itself internally.</p> <p>It suggests appointing board members with a background in cybersecurity and consumer privacy, reviewing the company's policies for "confidential reporting" and fine-tuning its investigative process for complaints that come from within Amazon.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 NKorea: outbreak 'explosively' spread</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-south-korea-north-545c208da2802a79d2187b853d0622ee">https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-south-korea-north-545c208da2802a79d2187b853d0622ee</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Six people have died and 350,000 have been treated for a fever that has spread "explosively" across North Korea, state media said Friday, a day after acknowledging a COVID-19 outbreak for the first time in the pandemic.</p> <p>North Korea likely doesn't have sufficient COVID-19 tests and said it didn't know the cause of the mass fevers. But a big COVID-19 outbreak could be devastating in a country with a broken health care system and an unvaccinated, malnourished population.</p> <p>The North's official Korean Central News Agency said of the 350,000 people who developed fevers since late April, 162,200 have recovered. It said 18,000 people were newly found with fever symptoms on Thursday alone, and 187,800 people are being isolated for treatment.</p> <p>One of the six people who died was infected with the omicron variant, KCNA said, but it wasn't immediately clear how many of the total illnesses were COVID-19.</p> <p>North Korea imposed a lockdown Thursday after acknowledging its first COVID-19 cases. Those reports said tests from an unspecified number of people came back positive for the omicron variant.</p> <p>It's unusual for isolated North Korea to admit to the outbreak of any infectious disease, let alone one as menacing as COVID-19, as the country is intensely proud and sensitive to outside perception about its self-described "socialist utopia."</p> <p>While North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had occasionally been candid about his worsening economy and other problems in recent years, he had repeatedly expressed confidence about North Korea's pandemic response and wasn't seen wearing a mask in public until a ruling party meeting Thursday when the North announced the COVID-19 infections.</p> <p>The spread of the virus was possibly accelerated by a massive military parade in Pyongyang on April 25, where Kim took center stage and showcased the most powerful missiles of his military nuclear program in front of tens of thousands.</p> <p>Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at South Korea's Sejong Institute, said the pace of the fever's spread suggests the crisis could last months and possibly into 2023, causing major disruption in the poorly equipped country.</p> <p>Some experts say the North's initial announcement communicates a willingness to receive outside aid.</p> <p>According to the latest figures from the World Health Organization, North Korea reported to the U.N. agency that it tested 64,207 people for COVID-19 in 2020 through March 22 of this year, a small number that may indicate insufficient tests for a population of 26 million.</p> <p>North Korea also lacks vaccines, COVID-19 antiviral pills and has likely very few intensive care units to treat serious cases, which may cause higher death rates than other nations, experts say.</p>

The North last year shunned millions of shots offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program, including doses of AstraZeneca and China's Sinovac vaccines, possibly because of questions about their effectiveness and unwillingness to accept monitoring requirements. The country lacks the extreme-cold storage systems that are required for mRNA vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna.

The office of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who began his single five-year term on Tuesday, said his government is willing to provide vaccines and other medical supplies and hopes to talk to the North about specific plans. It said the North hasn't yet asked for the South's help.

Boo Seung-chan, a spokesperson in South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said Seoul doesn't immediately have an estimate on the number of vaccine doses it could offer to North Korea.

Inter-Korean relations have deteriorated over the past three years amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, which derailed over disagreements about exchanging the release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against the North and the North's disarmament steps.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Thursday that Beijing was offering North Korea help in dealing with the outbreak.

"As its comrade, neighbor and friend, China stands ready to provide full support and assistance to the DPRK in the fight against the epidemic," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing, using the initials for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

KCNA said Kim was briefed about the fever outbreak when he visited the emergency epidemic prevention headquarters on Thursday and criticized officials for failing to prevent "a vulnerable point in the epidemic prevention system."

He said the spread of the fever has been centered around the capital, Pyongyang, and underscored the importance of isolating all work and residential units from one another while providing residents with every convenience during the lockdown.

"It is the most important challenge and supreme tasks facing our party to reverse the immediate public health crisis situation at an early date, restore the stability of epidemic prevention and protect the health and wellbeing of our people," KCNA quoted Kim as saying.

North Korea's claim of a perfect record in keeping out the virus for two and a half years was widely doubted. But its extremely strict border closure, large-scale quarantines and propaganda that stressed anti-virus controls as a matter of "national existence" may have staved off a huge outbreak until now.

Hours after confirming the COVID-19 outbreak Thursday, North Korea launched three short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea in what possibly was meant to be a display of its strength. It was the North's 16th round of missile launches this year.

Citing North Korea's shunning of the COVAX vaccines, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the United States supported international aid efforts but doesn't plan to share its vaccine supplies with the North.

"We do continue to support international efforts aimed at the provision of critical humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable North Koreans, and this is, of course, a broader part of the DPRK continuing to exploit its own citizens by not accepting this type of aid," Psaki said Thursday in Washington.

"It's not just vaccines. It's also a range of humanitarian assistance that could very much help the people and the country and instead they divert resources to build their unlawful nuclear and ballistic missiles programs."

HEADLINE	05/12 More King Co. families seeking shelter
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/homeless/marys-place-fundraising-family-homelessness-king-county/281-38733a7e-9d46-4f8e-b3f0-6c1600ec3167">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/homeless/marys-place-fundraising-family-homelessness-king-county/281-38733a7e-9d46-4f8e-b3f0-6c1600ec3167</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A <a href="#">fundraising effort</a> is underway until midnight to help homeless families. All 700 beds in <a href="#">Mary's Place's five family shelters</a> have often been full, according to the nonprofit organization. On an average night, Mary's Place says it is only able to provide shelter to less than half of the families looking for a place to stay.</p> <p>Mary's Place operates the King County Emergency Family Shelter Intake Line and says the number of calls they are receiving for help is the highest it's been in years.</p> <p>On Thursday, as the rain came down, Tanita Horton, said the conditions outside make the desperate situation even more difficult. Horton works for Mary's Place at its Burien shelter.</p> <p>"Look at the weather that we're experiencing, and to tell someone that, no we don't have a place to bring you inside right now to safety, and you have to stay out and essentially weather the storm, it's heartbreaking," said Horton.</p> <p>"The need is greater than it's ever been. This is a crisis," said Marty Hartman, the Executive Director of Mary's Place.</p> <p>Hartman spent Thursday in a final fundraising push. Mary's Place's Dream Big fundraising campaign kicked off on April 1 and it ends at 11:59 p.m. on May 12. If Mary's Place raises \$1 million then Amazon will match the donations. The campaign raises rapid response funds to help Mary's Place operate emergency shelters and help families financially struggling to stay in their homes.</p> <p>"The money for rental assistance is gone. It's been depleted, and it's not going to be replenished anytime soon. We need to prevent this flood into homelessness," said Hartman.</p> <p>Data from the King County Regional Homelessness Authority show the problem getting worse. The last count in King County found more than 11,751 people experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>"I know that together we can figure out a way to make things better and to put the pieces back together for families that are struggling and experiencing homelessness," said Horton.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<i>Donate or learn more <a href="#">here</a>.</i>

HEADLINE	05/12 WSDOT: Seattle 'Revive I-5' lane closures
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/first-16-weekends-i-5-lane-closures-begin-friday/NG6NP2EW0BDGFPZNQAHDMLEYPU/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/first-16-weekends-i-5-lane-closures-begin-friday/NG6NP2EW0BDGFPZNQAHDMLEYPU/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Drivers who use southbound Interstate 5 in Seattle should plan for 16 weekend lane closures while crews replace worn expansion joints, starting this weekend.</p> <p>There are also southbound I-5 lane closures in Mountlake Terrace this weekend.</p> <p><b>Seattle lane reductions</b></p> <p>Crews are planning on replacing several expansion joints near Spokane Street starting at about 7:30 p.m. on Friday, May 13, according to a <a href="#">blog post</a> from the Washington State Department of Transportation. Work was originally schedule to begin last weekend, but was postponed due to weather conditions.</p> <p>The southbound I-5 mainline lanes will remain open, but crews will start reducing the number of lanes south of Interstate 90, eventually narrowing traffic down to a single lane.</p>



Once the lanes are closed, WSDOT's contractor, C.A. Carey, will replace the left side of the expansion joints near Spokane Street. Only a single lane of southbound I-5 in that area will be open to traffic all day on Saturday, May 14, and Sunday, May 15. All lanes will reopen by 5 a.m. on Monday, May 16.

Not only do old expansion joints make for a bumpy ride, but they can also pop up, damage tires and require emergency road work.

Last year, WSDOT replaced pavement in the area as the first part of the Revive I-5 project. This year, crews will replace 35 expansion joints.

"This is really important work, as we replace expansion joints in this area. Keep in mind I-5 was built in the 60s. Thirty-two of the 35 expansion joints in this work area are original expansion joints," said WSDOT spokesperson Amy Moreno.

WSDOT said unless drivers want to endure long delays, you should find alternate routes or take public transportation.

"Plan ahead. You can always get to where you need to go, you can consider things like using the light rail, taking the bus. Alternative forms of transportation, even driving at a different time. Possibly before 8 a.m. or after 8 p.m.," said Moreno.

WSDOT said there will be about [16 weekends of lane reductions](#) that will continue through summer. Work is planned for every weekend, weather dependent, except for the following:

- Memorial Day, May 28 to 30
- University of Washington commencement, June 11 to 12
- Independence Day, July 2 to 4
- Labor Day, Sept. 3 to 5

Each expansion joint takes roughly 55 hours to repair and rain could cause delays or lead to additional postponements.

#### **Mountlake Terrace lane closures**

Southbound I-5 will be fully closed overnight this weekend between 220th Street Southwest and 236th Place Southwest in the Mountlake Terrace area while crews work on the Lynnwood Link Light Rail extension. Southbound traffic will be detoured off the freeway.

Northbound I-5 will remain open.

The closures are scheduled for:

- Friday, May 13, through Saturday, May 14, from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- Saturday, May 14, through Sunday, May 15, 11 p.m. to 6:30 a.m.
- Sunday, May 15, through Monday, May 16, 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.

See a [map of the closure area at this link](#).

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Report: home rental prices spiking</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/new-report-finds-home-rental-prices-spiking-along-with-anxiety-of-some-renters">https://komonews.com/news/local/new-report-finds-home-rental-prices-spiking-along-with-anxiety-of-some-renters</a>
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — As people in Washington state contend with higher prices for gas and groceries, many renters are also facing a spike in home rental prices, an increase that appears to be more pronounced on the eastside.</p> <p>Some renters told KOMO News that their rent payments have jumped with some increasing by hundreds of dollars.</p>

Curtis Berryman said he saved a few hundred bucks a month when he opted recently to sign a long-term lease for a Bellevue property. Otherwise, he was facing a rent increase of about 10 percent had he not agreed to the longer rental period.

"That was kind of the decision," he said. "I had to sign a longer-term lease to not get priced out."

According to a national rent report from [Zumper.com](https://www.zumper.com), the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in Bellevue is nearly \$2,500 a month, a more than 20 percent increase over last year.

The higher rental costs are in addition to rising costs for other consumer items because of an increase in inflation.

"I think everything these days adds up," Berryman said.

A home realtor in Bellevue said as rent costs rise they are also driving up home prices and property taxes, which could force some people to move out.

"That could be moving to a different part of the region that's more inexpensive," realtor Danny Greco said. "That could mean moving to a different state. I've definitely had those conversations with people."

John Wilson, the King County tax assessor, on Thursday noted what he called an unprecedented spike in property valuations on the eastside.

He said his office is working to offer some property tax relief down the road for some owners dealing with other rising costs.

"We've seen gas at the pump at \$5 or more a gallon (and) the food (or) the chicken you can buy for \$5 at the grocery store a year ago is now \$12.95," he said. "So we're trying to listen to that and try to figure out how we set fair values while we figure out how this is actually going to affect people."

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HEADLINE	05/13 G7 invoke 'unity' against Russia
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/g7-invoke-unity-russia-eu-pledges-ukraine-funds-84690145">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/g7-invoke-unity-russia-eu-pledges-ukraine-funds-84690145</a>
GIST	<p>WEISSENHAUS, Germany -- The European Union is giving Ukraine another 500 million euros (\$520 million) to buy heavy weapons to fend off the Russian invasion, the bloc's foreign affairs chief said Friday at a gathering in Germany of top diplomats from the Group of Seven wealthy nations.</p> <p>Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign policy, said he was also hopeful of getting the bloc's member nations to agree to an oil embargo against Russia soon, despite misgivings from some countries.</p> <p>"We will provide a new tranche of 500 more millions to support the military of Ukraine," Borrell told reporters ahead of the G-7 meeting in Weissenhaus, on Germany's Baltic Sea coast. The funds would be allocated for the purchase of heavy weapons and take the EU's total financial support for Ukraine to 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion), he added.</p> <p>Top diplomats from Germany, Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Japan and the United States also are attending the meeting. They plan to seek more ways to pile pressure on Russia through economic sanctions, isolate Moscow internationally and to counter disinformation spread by Russia, Borrell said.</p> <p>EU diplomats are scheduled to hold talks Monday on a possible embargo of Russian oil. Hungary has resisted the move because of its heavy dependence on Russian imports, but Borrell expressed optimism.</p> <p>"We need this agreement, and we will have it," he said.</p>

	<p>“We have to understand the specific circumstances of every one of the 27 member states,” he added. “But if there is not agreement at the level of the ambassadors Monday, the ministers, when they gather for the Foreign Affairs Council, they have to provide the political impetus.”</p> <p>Borrell said it was important for the G-7 meeting to present a “united front” - a sentiment echoed by British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss.</p> <p>“It’s very important at this time that we keep up the pressure on Vladimir Putin by supplying more weapons to Ukraine and by increasing the sanctions,” she said. “G-7 unity is vital during this crisis to protect freedom and democracy.”</p> <p>Among the issues on the agenda in Weissenhaus is how to unblock millions of tons of grain stuck in Ukraine, a major agricultural exporter, that are urgently needed to ease food shortages around the world.</p> <p>Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and his counterpart from neighboring Moldova, Nicu Popescu, were invited to attend the meeting as guests.</p> <p>About 3,500 police officers were deployed at the event site northeast of Hamburg to provide security.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Recall: Mercedes vehicles</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/mercedes-recalls-292k-vehicles-fix-problem-brakes-84669486">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/mercedes-recalls-292k-vehicles-fix-problem-brakes-84669486</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>DETROIT -- Mercedes-Benz is telling the owners of more than 292,000 vehicles in the U.S. to stop driving them due to a problem that could cause the brakes to fail.</p> <p>The German automaker is recalling the vehicles and says it will offer free towing so the owners can get them to a dealership for service. The recall covers certain ML, GL and R-Class vehicles from the 2006 through 2012 model years.</p> <p>Mercedes says in documents posted Thursday by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that moisture can get into a brake booster housing and cause corrosion. That can cause a vacuum leak, which would decrease brake performance.</p> <p>In rare cases, hard braking could cause mechanical damage to the booster, and it may not be possible to stop the vehicles with the brake pedal, Mercedes said in a statement Thursday. A foot-activated parking brake would still work.</p> <p>The company says it has no reports of crashes or injuries.</p> <p>Dealers will remove a rubber sleeve and inspect the booster, replacing parts as needed. Owners will be notified by letter starting May 27.</p> <p>If repairs can't be done immediately, dealers will help find loaner cars for the owners, the company says in the statement.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Nurses march; demand health care reform</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/nurses-march-capital-demanding-reforms-protect-patients/story?id=84676325">https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/nurses-march-capital-demanding-reforms-protect-patients/story?id=84676325</a>
<b>GIST</b>	Thousands of nurses from around the country marched to the White House and past the U.S. Capitol Thursday demanding reforms to the health care industry they claim has been putting their lives in danger and prioritizing profits over the care of patients.

They called for three major changes: fair wages, safe-staffing ratios, and protection against workplace violence -- issues nurses say have only been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[As the nation marked 1 million deaths from Covid](#), the nurses gathering in front of the White House warned of what they said was the dangerous nurse-to-patient staffing ratio putting both patients and nurses in danger.

While the ratio of nurses to patients depends on the type of care, a nurse most commonly cares for three patients at one time. Some nurses at Thursday's protest reported caring for eight to 10 patients simultaneously. Cindy Reuss said she left her job after 17 year due to unsafe staffing ratios.

Her job job was her heart, she said, in an interview with ABC affiliate WJLA.

"None of us want to leave bedside nursing," Reuss said. "But we cannot do it. With eight to ten patients, it's not safe. We just want the opportunity to be good nurses."

Other nurses at the protest highlighted what they said was the lack of protection nurses have against workplace violence.

Thomas Fernandes, who's been a critical care travel nurse for five years, claimed a patient shattered a meth pipe on his head with no repercussions.

"Put your hands on a cop, you go to jail. Put your hands on a nurse and you can come back next week," Fernandes said, pointing to what he said was a lack of penalties for patients who harm those dedicated to caring for them.

Adriane Carrier said she has been injured three times and spent two and half years out of work. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nursing and residential care facilities have the second-highest workplace injury incident rates in the country.

"We need to have a safe workplaces and consequences for injuring and harming health care workers and nurses," she said.

During their march past the U.S. Capitol, the nurses also demanded fair, reasonable and competitive wages, noting what they said is the increase in hospital profits while they've seen little to no increase in pay.

"This is a time where the health care industry and hospitals have made record profits while [nurses] are leaving the bedside," Carrier said. "50,000 more nurses will be leaving the bedside. There will be no more nurses to take care of Americans and our country and that is going to be the biggest tragedy of all."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Calif. minimum wage increase: inflation</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/inflation-forces-increase-california-minimum-wage-84683382">https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/inflation-forces-increase-california-minimum-wage-84683382</a>
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- California's minimum wage will jump to \$15.50 per hour next year, Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration announced Thursday, an increase triggered by soaring inflation that will benefit about 3 million workers.</p> <p>The increase is required by a state law passed in 2016. But it comes at a good time for Democrats in the nation's most populous state as they rush to find ways to boost taxpayers' bank accounts in an election year marked by rising prices that have diluted the purchasing power of consumers.</p> <p>Thursday, in a preview of his upcoming budget proposal, Newsom doubled down on his plan to send up to \$800 checks to car owners to offset this year's record-high gas prices despite opposition from Democrats in the Legislature. And he revealed a new proposal to send at least \$1,000 checks to 600,000 hospital and nursing home workers in recognition of their dangerous work throughout the pandemic.</p>

It's part of a new spending proposal to put \$18.1 billion into taxpayers' pockets through a combination of rebates and assistance with rent, health insurance premiums and utility bills.

"We're still overall having a very strong economic recovery in the state from the COVID-19 recession," California Department of Finance spokesman H.D. Palmer said. "But it's clear that we face a lot of headwinds: gas prices remain high, food prices are high because of inflation."

California lawmakers voted to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour in 2016, but the increase was phased in over several years. Today, the minimum wage is \$15 per hour for companies with 25 or more workers and \$14 per hour for companies with 25 or fewer employees.

The law says the minimum wage must increase to \$15.50 per hour for everyone if inflation increased by more than 7% between the 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. Thursday, the California Department of Finance said they project inflation for the 2022 fiscal year — which ends June 30 — will be 7.6% higher than the year before, triggering the increase.

Official inflation figures won't be final until this summer. But the Newsom administration believes the growth will be more than enough to trigger the automatic increase.

California has about 3 million minimum wage workers, according to a conservative estimate from the state Department of Finance. The increase in the minimum wage will be about \$3 billion, or less than 0.1% of the \$3.3 trillion in personal income Californians are projected to earn.

California Department of Finance Director Keely Martin Bosler said the increase could cause prices to jump for restaurants, which have low profit margins. But overall, she said the minimum wage increase is "expected to have a very minimal impact on overall inflation in the state's economy."

The increase will impact smaller companies the most, which will see the minimum wage jump \$1.50 in January. Kerry Jackson, a fellow at the conservative-leaning Pacific Research Institute's Center for California Reform, said the increase could cause some employees at smaller companies to work fewer hours.

"It may be very painful for them," he said.

Inflation has been a problem everywhere, as consumer prices jumped 8.3% nationally last month from a year ago. A labor shortage throughout the pandemic has prompted many companies to increase pay sometimes beyond the minimum wage just to attract and retain workers.

In California, average gas prices hit a record high in March of \$5.91 per gallon. Newsom and Democratic legislative leaders have pledged to return some of the states' record-breaking budget surplus to taxpayers. But so far, despite being from the same political party, they haven't agreed on how to do it.

Newsom's plan would send up to \$800 checks to car owners — \$400 per car for a max of two cars per owner — plus another \$750 million to give everyone free rides on public transportation for three months.

Democratic leaders in the Legislature have rejected that plan, instead favoring one that would send \$200 checks to low-to-moderate income taxpayers and their dependents.

"Senate Democrats do not believe a rebate tied to car ownership does the job," Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins said. "That plan leaves out non-car owners, including low income and elderly Californians, who are also impacted by the current high costs of consumer goods and are also deserving of relief."

	<p>Republicans favor temporarily suspending the state's gas tax, which at 51.5 cents per gallon is the second highest in the nation. But Newsom and Democratic leaders have rejected that plan, arguing it's better to send relief directly to taxpayers.</p> <p>Newsom's plan to send checks to health care workers would apply to anyone who works inside a hospital or a nursing home — including doctors, nurses and other support staff. Workers would be guaranteed a \$1,000 check. But if companies agree to add in another \$500, the state will match it for a total of \$2,000.</p> <p>Dave Regan, president of SEIU-United Healthcare Workers West, said staffing problems at hospitals and nursing homes have only worsened as workers left the industry in droves during the pandemic “because of increased health risks, emotional and mental stress, and overwork.”</p> <p>“These workers have been on the front lines throughout the COVID pandemic,” Bosler said. “They also are suffering very critical retention issues and shortages and we hope that additional payment will help to address those issues.”</p> <p>Newsom also proposed new spending on Thursday to \$2.7 billion to fully fund the state's rental assistance program, adding another \$1.2 billion to a fund that helps people pay their utility bills, \$439 million to temporarily suspend the tax on diesel fuel and \$157 million to waive child care fees for low-income families.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Pandemic orphan numbers reach 250,000</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/1m-us-covid-deaths-pandemic-orphan-numbers-reach/story?id=84677409">https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/1m-us-covid-deaths-pandemic-orphan-numbers-reach/story?id=84677409</a>
GIST	<p>Across the U.S., young people are showing their resilience even as they face a new day without a parent.</p> <p>More than <a href="#">250,000 children have lost a parent</a> or a primary caregiver to COVID-19. Yet, the voices of those adults, taken too soon, still echo.</p> <p>For Tre and Jenny Burrows, it's their mother, Cindy Dawkins. For A.J. Arellano, he hears dad Alan at every football game.</p> <p>"I just know that he's watching me. I think it's helps me with playing better," Arellano told ABC News' David Muir, the anchor of "World News Tonight."</p> <p>For several months, Muir followed five families -- including the Arellanos and the Burrowses -- as they faced unspeakable pain and tapped into unmatched strength.</p> <p><b>Playing hockey for Dad</b></p> <p>In Lindhurst, N.J., 13-year-old Colton Koehne and his sister, Kylie, 15, are taking it one day at a time without their father, Eric.</p> <p>"What's it been like?" Muir asked Kylie.</p> <p>"It's been really hard, like, literally changed my entire life," she said. "I've really tried to, like, live my life more because tomorrow really isn't promised."</p> <p>Eric Koehne was 51 years old when he died on April 29, 2021. He and his wife both had COVID and were treated in the hospital. Eric died the day they got the call saying the vaccines were now available for them.</p> <p>The two teens said they think of him every day.</p> <p>"Sometimes I'll text him and I think that that helps me," Kylie told Muir. "It's like my way of communicating. It's bittersweet because I know I'm not gonna get a reply back."</p>

Once, she sent him a photo of a sunset.

"What did you say?" Muir asked.

"Thank you for the beautiful sky. I miss you," Kylie said.

Janice Koehne, their mother, said she has been doing the same thing.

"I started sleeping on his side of the bed because I couldn't bare rolling over at night and seeing that empty spot," she said. "And in the morning, you know, (I) tell him, 'I'm ready to start the day and do the best that I can as a mom' and that I'll take care of our kids."

In honor of his father, Colton took up hockey, playing for the Lindhurst Bears. His father, Eric, was a big Rangers fan and a Marine. Eric Koehne's hat and pins are on Colton's dresser, as are his rings.

On another recent day, they visited a farm with a growing tribute called Rami's Heart. The stones placed there bear the names of loved ones lost.

Kylie and Colton found their father's name. Then, Kylie gave a speech.

"Learning to live without one of the most important people in my life has not only been beyond difficult but also completely life changing," she said. "We are slowly learning to find happiness in our lives again."

### **Caring for Cornelia**

On the Choctaw Reservation in Mississippi, Mylyndie Bell is raising her niece -- 7-year-old Cornelia JaRose Hollitoppa Bell.

Hollitoppa means "precious" in Choctaw. Before Cornelia JaRose was born, her parents, Mindy and Craig, had tried to have children for years. She was a gift.

Cornelia JaRose was just 5 when her parents died three months apart in 2020. Both got COVID before the vaccines were ready.

Their photos are still on the refrigerator.

Mylyndie, her paternal aunt, took her in -- a wish of Cornelia JaRose's parents should something ever happen to them.

COVID's devastating impact has been felt on the reservation. At school, the classrooms are still nearly empty.

Cornelia JaRose is just one of seven children in her first-grade classroom. Many of the children there have lost the parents and grandparents who used to bring them to school.

And it's not just there -- nearly 10 percent of Native American children have lost a parent or caregiver.

According to Dr. Susan Hillis, PhD, in epidemiology, a former researcher with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who is working on orphanhood caused by the pandemic, Native American children have been the most affected by COVID-19.

"So many people had passed away from COVID, especially us Choctaws here," Bell said to Muir.

Bell lost her mother -- Cornelia JaRose's grandmother, Annie -- and said two cousins died from COVID a week apart from each other.

**'Everything feels different now'**



Tre Burrows and his sister Jenny are now raising their two sisters -- Zoe Clarke, 15; and Sierra Clarke, 12 -- and hoping to make their mother proud.

The siblings who live in Boynton Beach, Fla., lost their mother, 50-year-old Cindy Dawkins, on Aug. 7, 2021.

On one recent day, Tre, 20, prepares for work at 5:45 a.m. as Jenny gets the girls to school.

"I wake up at 5:30 [a.m.], take a shower ... and hopefully I have a little time to read my Bible and eat a bit of food," he told Muir.

Tre is studying to become a firefighter. He and Jenny have a deal: He fulfills his dream and then she becomes a dental hygienist.

"I really don't have much time for a lot of other things because I have like more of a responsibility to my sisters now. ... I'm always thinking, 'Do they have food? Am I spending enough time with them?'" he said.

His mother, Cindy, a single mother of four, had been afraid to get the COVID vaccine. He said he cried when he got the news of her death over the telephone.

"And then, my mind went to, like, my sisters. 'How are we gonna, like, make sure we all stay together? How are we gonna pay for everything? Like, what's all of that gonna look like?'" he said.

"Found out she had COVID one day. Next day, she was gone," said 25-year-old Jenny Burrows.

Now she and Tre are the parents. That harsh, new reality was tough to handle at first, with them in charge of the bills and the call from the insurance company.

"My mom used to handle everything. ... I have no idea because we look at our bills and we're like 'How did she do all this? This is ridiculous.' ... Everything was always paid," Jenny said.

Then came Janie Yoshida, whose daughter had been in a school play with Tre. She told them she'd help with the rent and do their mother's taxes, which needed to be filed despite her death. Yoshida also started a GoFundMe for the four, hoping the funds would help keep them all together.

"Are there moments when you ask your mom how you're doing," Muir asked Tre.

"Oh yea, a lot. Just like 'I hope I'm doing pretty good, 'cause you were doing amazing,'" Tre said. "So I hope we're filling your shoes to, I guess, your standards."

### **'I say a little prayer and I talk to my dad'**

A.J. and Evan Arellano were just 16 and 14, respectively, when their father, Alan, died of COVID on Aug. 27, 2021.

Alan was 49 years old. He'd gotten his first shot of the vaccine and was waiting on the second.

A.J., 17, still remembers when he learned about his father's death.

It was the first football game of the season and A.J. was in Georgia. His father was in the hospital in a coma. A.J.; his mother, Karyn; and his younger brother, Evan, sent his father a message.

"When I got home from the long bus ride back home from Georgia at around 4:00, 5:00 a.m., I learned the news from my mom as soon as I walked through the door," he told Muir. "She was just crying hysterically. And I kinda knew. ... So I just gave her a hug. ... I was just frozen, kinda. Stuck."

Nine months after his father's death, football keeps him going, A.J. said. He said his father never missed a game.

"Before every game, you go to the sideline," Muir said. "What do you do?"

"Well, I say a little prayer and I talk to my dad just like I would before every game. He would give me a phone call. So I just act like I'm on the same phone call and I just hear him talking back with me...And I know that he's watching me," A.J. told Muir. "So I know that I can play the game without any worries."

The two teen boys are now raised by their mother, Karyn Arellano, in Florida.

"I feel like now my job is really to live for both of us because I, too, don't like to miss anything so I sit here for both of us. I sit here and I watch for both of us. And I cheer for both of us," she said.

Her husband, Alan, was a college counselor. The family now lives on her salary alone. Arellano is a kindergarten teacher -- the strain of losing one income is overwhelming.

"Because I'm not unemployed, I did not qualify for mortgage assistance," she said. "With my income, after I pay the mortgage, I have \$200 left... That doesn't include the water, the electricity, the food."

The family has cut expenses -- cable, lawn service -- to keep costs low.

A family friend also opened a GoFundMe to help them. It has been a lifeline.

### **Remembering Martin**

And in Waldwick, N.J., Pamela Addison raises her young children -- 2-year-old Graeme and 4-year-old Elsie.

Her husband, Martin, died on April 5, 2020 before the vaccines were available.

His last birthday with Elsie was when she turned 2. Graeme was just 5 months old.

Elsie's first time saying "I love you" came while in the car as she spoke to her father in heaven.

"That was the first time she ever said 'I love you' 'cause that was like the stage that she finally understood what was love was and he missed that," Pamela said.

Pamela said she knows Elsie now carries the weight of her father's death on her.

"She gets sad when people leave. Like, if we have, like, a gathering... she told me she was sad after. And we're like, 'Why are you sad?' And she says, 'Because everyone left.'... It's like that abandonment," said Pamela Addison.

Pamela started a Facebook group for other parents who are suddenly [parenting](#) alone. It has at least 980 mothers.

She said her children's birthdays get even more special attention, especially for Elsie.

"She definitely knows that this is the time where Papa disappeared. ... So, I just try to, you know, keep a happy face and, you know, obviously he's in our hearts and on our minds," she said. "I just try to make him present."

### **Starting fresh in Florida**

Six months after losing their mother, Tre and Jenny Burrows were packing in Florida. With their two jobs and the money raised by Janie Yoshida on GoFundMe, they were moving into their first house.

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>"She's always wanted a house for us," Jenny Burrows told Muir. "So, I know she's probably ecstatic right now."</p> <p>In the new house, everyone has their own room.</p> <p>"I hear myself sometimes when I talk and I hear her (mother). And I'm like, 'Oh my gosh. Wow,'" Jenny said.</p> <p>As for Tre Burrows, he passed his first test toward becoming a firefighter.</p> <p>Back in Mississippi, Mylyndie was getting Cornelia JaRose ready for the Choctaw's first festival in nearly three years, dressing the little girl in traditional wear.</p> <p>"They get to choose two dances and they dance in front of the whole community," she said.</p> <p>Karyn Arellano said Americans cannot forget about the children orphaned during the pandemic.</p> <p>"We need to check on the kids because even though they may have a smile on their face, inside they could be dying inside. And we need to check on that," she said.</p> <p>"I know you worry about that every day," Muir told her.</p> <p>"Every day. I pray that my son will be OK, my boys will be OK and that they'll pull through this," Karyn said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Ukraine forces hold line in Donbas</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukrainian-forces-hold-the-line-in-donbas-as-western-heavy-weapons-join-the-battle-11652362422?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukrainian-forces-hold-the-line-in-donbas-as-western-heavy-weapons-join-the-battle-11652362422?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>MARYINKA, Ukraine—The front line between Ukrainian troops and Russian-backed forces has skirted this village in Donbas since the conflict in eastern Ukraine began in 2014.</p> <p>The line moved by just a few hundred yards after Russia launched its all-out invasion on Feb. 24, a sign that Moscow is struggling to reach even its most modest war aims in Ukraine.</p> <p>“We are still here, holding firm, and this by itself is a victory,” said a Ukrainian Army captain as he waited out a salvo of Russian rockets at his mortar position in Maryinka on Wednesday.</p> <p>The rockets slammed into the village’s main square, enveloping it in black smoke and peppering with shrapnel the remains of the village’s golden-domed church.</p> <p>When Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the war, he described it as a “special operation to protect Donbas,” which by then he no longer recognized as part of Ukraine.</p> <p>In late March, when his initial attempt to seize the capital, Kyiv, collapsed because of stiff Ukrainian resistance, Mr. Putin reformulated the campaign’s current objective as “liberating” all of the Donbas areas still controlled by the government.</p> <p>More than three weeks after the massive Russian offensive that aims to encircle Ukraine’s best forces in Donbas kicked off on April 18, Moscow’s achievements so far are limited at best. In a Senate testimony this week, Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier, the head of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, described the current stage of the war as a stalemate.</p> <p>“The Russians aren’t winning, and the Ukrainians aren’t winning,” he said.</p>

Prospects for peace soon are slim, Ukrainian, Western and Russian officials say.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says that the war can only end when all of the occupied Ukrainian territories are liberated. In addition to parts of Donbas, Russia has captured most of the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia and a large part of the Kharkiv region.

In southern Ukraine, in particular, it is introducing the ruble. Moscow-appointed authorities there say these regions will be annexed to Russia.

Despite Russia's battlefield difficulties, Mr. Putin hasn't given up on aspirations to seize all or most of Ukraine, and sees the campaign for Donbas as just a stage in this grander plan, Ukrainian and U.S. officials say. Senior Russian government personalities and Russian TV propaganda continue to call for eliminating Ukraine as a sovereign state.

"The very concept of Ukraine should not exist in the future, and neither should the concept of a Ukrainian," Oleg Matveychev, a senior lawmaker from Russia's ruling party and former Kremlin adviser, said last week.

In the past three weeks, Russian troops have managed to occupy some Donbas towns, mostly in the Luhansk region. But they have also sustained heavy losses and failed to conquer any of the major cities in Donbas that Russia didn't hold at the end of March.

Communication lines within Ukrainian-held parts of Donbas remain open to troop reinforcements, weapons, fuel and food.

At the same time, Moscow has lost strategic terrain in the nearby Kharkiv region, the staging ground for its push toward Donbas. Ukrainian forces in recent days forced Russian troops outside the range of field artillery around Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, in some places all the way to the Russian border. These counteroffensives also are starting to threaten Russia's extended supply routes into Donbas.

Western weapons, including NATO-standard 155-mm howitzers supplied by the U.S. and its allies, have begun arriving on the battlefield in Donbas. Ukrainian officials say that will allow them to switch from defense to offense and seek to regain lost ground.

"Our first task was to stop and destroy the enemy, but after that we have to liberate everything that they have taken from us. This will take time, at least the whole summer. It won't be quick," Pavlo Kyrylenko, the head of the Ukrainian military administration for Donetsk region, said in an interview. "The important thing is that the weapons from our partners, especially the U.S., arrive quickly."

With the conflict turning into a war of attrition, only continuing foreign support could allow Ukraine to survive and repulse its much bigger and better-armed neighbor, Ukrainian officials say. This now largely hinges on the U.S. Senate moving quickly on the \$40 billion Ukraine bill that was passed by the House on Tuesday, they say. The bill includes more than \$18.7 billion in military and security aid to Ukraine and to backfill already distributed U.S. defense supplies.

"We enter the new phase of the war amid a global change in the attitude toward repelling Russia. Despite immense pressure and missile attacks on us, Russia is now pushing itself into a situation where it won't be able to win the resource war," said Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Hanna Maliar. "But it will take time for the Western weapons to arrive in quantities needed to equalize the balance and ensure our victory. In the meantime, we will face very difficult weeks, or even months, ahead."

Ukraine is able to move Western arms through the country because of the success of its air defenses in deterring Russian warplanes from operating over most Ukrainian-controlled territory.

This means that Russia's only way of striking deep into Ukraine is via expensive cruise missiles launched from Russia, Belarus or ships in the Black and Caspian seas. Russia so far hasn't been able to track

moving targets, such as weapons convoys, away from the Ukrainian front lines and is focusing instead on hitting with missiles infrastructure targets like bridges and fuel facilities—and often apartment blocks.

Ukraine's own air force, rarely seen in March and April, now frequently flies in the skies over Donbas once again, soldiers here say. On Wednesday, two Ukrainian Su-25 ground-attack jets roared just above emerald-green fields to hit targets on the front line in Donbas, and then sped back after their mission.

Before the invasion began, two Russian proxy statelets established in 2014, the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, controlled roughly one-third of each of the two Ukrainian regions. The contact line between these two breakaway statelets and Kyiv-held areas was heavily fortified, with systems of bunkers and trenches deterring frontal assaults.

In the first days of the war, Russia swiftly moved through the sparsely populated rural areas of Ukrainian-ruled Luhansk, running up against determined defense only at the Severodonetsk agglomeration that serves as the Ukrainian administrative center for the region.

At the same time, Russia quickly seized the rural terrain in the south of the Donetsk region and besieged the biggest city there, Mariupol, where the last remaining Ukrainian defenders were holed up in the sprawling compound of the Azovstal steel plant.

That February advance has left the remaining third of the Donetsk region, including big cities like Kramatorsk, Sloviansk, Bakhmut and Pokrovsk, under Ukrainian rule.

Despite repeated attempts, Russian forces have by and large failed to punch through the Ukrainian fortifications on the contact line with the two "people's republics."

"We've been digging in for eight years, with some of our best brigades doing the job," said Vitaliy Barabash, the head of the Ukrainian military administration for the city of Avdiivka, just north of Donetsk, the biggest city in Donbas and the capital of the Russian-controlled statelet. "The front line here practically hasn't changed. They pushed us backward a bit in the beginning, then the other day we pushed them back. Their warplanes come in to strike every day almost on schedule, from far away."

Russian aircraft no longer dare to fly above Avdiivka itself after three jets were shot down by U.S.-supplied Stinger missiles, he said. Instead, they fire their rockets from deep inside Russian-controlled territory.

In Maryinka, which abuts the western neighborhoods of Donetsk city, a Russian tank column Monday made yet another attempt to force its way into the village, where blooming orchards surround the crumpled skeletons of charred buildings and burned civilian cars dot the main road.

The column was spotted by Ukrainian drones, hit by artillery, and then finished off by infantry armed with Javelin and NLAW missiles, said a reconnaissance officer of the Ukrainian Army's 54th Brigade. The Ukrainian military released a video recording of the strike, which he said destroyed at least eight Russian tanks and armored vehicles.

"It looks like they are forced to fight. It's hard to understand how they wage the war," said the officer, who operates out of an abandoned home in Maryinka, an unexploded warhead from the Russian Grad multiple-launch rocket system stuck in the soft soil of its garden. While his own mortar unit still hasn't received Western launchers, it is already supplied with shiny mortars made in Italy and Croatia.

The Russians have had more successes punching from the north, via the town of Izyum. Yet, even in that direction, their advance has been mostly halted in the past week, Ukrainian and Western officials say, as Ukrainian forces north of Sloviansk are successfully using the river Siverskyi Donets as a natural defense line. Russia has been unable to break through a more recent system of fortifications that Donetsk's Ukrainian authorities built around the town of Dolyna, which straddles the main highway leading from the north.

	<p>A Russian attempt over the weekend to set up pontoon bridges to cross the river and cut the only route to Severodonetsk ended in a rout after successful artillery and airstrikes, Ukrainian officials say. Drone images from the area show at least 32 destroyed or abandoned Russian armored vehicles, including several tanks. While the Russian Defense Ministry hasn't commented, military-linked Russian channels on Telegram have confirmed the setback.</p> <p>Ukraine's successful resistance in Donbas has prompted the U.S. director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, to conclude in her testimony to the Senate on Tuesday that it is increasingly unlikely that Russia will be able to capture the entirety of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and establish a buffer zone around them in the coming weeks.</p> <p>"Putin faces a mismatch between his ambitions and his current conventional military capabilities," she said.</p> <p>Mr. Kyrylenko, the head of the Donetsk military administration, warned that even heavy losses aren't deterring continuing Russian attacks.</p> <p>"They keep coming like zombies: We destroy their troops, their armor, and then the new ones arrive. We cannot relax because the situation remains difficult and the enemy is very numerous," he said. "But now we have proven that we're able to not only halt but also defeat the enemy with quality, not quantity—no matter how numerous the enemy is."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Parents stress: baby formula shortage</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/12/us-baby-formula-shortage">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/12/us-baby-formula-shortage</a>
GIST	<p>Many parents are hunting for infant formula because of a combination of short- and long-term problems that has hit most of the biggest US brands.</p> <p>Millions of babies in the US rely on formula, which is the only source of nutrition recommended for infants who are not exclusively breastfed.</p> <p>Here's a look at what's behind the problem and what parents can do:</p> <p><b>Why is there a shortage?</b> Ongoing supply disruptions and recent safety recalls have combined to leave many pharmacy and supermarket shelves bare.</p> <p>The problems began last year as the Covid-19 pandemic led to disruptions in labor, transportation and raw materials – economy-wide issues that did not spare the formula industry. Inventory was further squeezed by parents stockpiling during lockdowns.</p> <p>Then in February, Abbott Nutrition recalled several major brands of powdered formula and shut down its Sturgis, <a href="#">Michigan</a>, factory when federal officials began investigating four babies who suffered bacterial infections after consuming formula from the facility.</p> <p>Abbott is one of only a handful of companies that produce the vast majority of the US formula supply, so their recall wiped out a large segment of the market.</p> <p><b>What is in baby formula?</b> Most formulas contain protein from cow's milk that's been altered to be easier to digest and enhanced with extra nutrients needed for growth and development. The <a href="#">Food</a> and Drug Administration (FDA) sets specific nutritional requirements, including minimum amounts of protein, fat, calcium and a number of vitamins. Formula makers achieve those levels by adding various sugars, oils and minerals.</p>

The formulas are designed to mimic breast milk, though studies have repeatedly shown better health outcomes for babies who are breastfed.

### **Why can't all mothers rely on breast milk?**

Health professionals recommend exclusively breastfeeding babies until they are six-months-old. But federal figures show that only one in four are relying solely on breast milk at that age.

Mothers face a number of challenges to long-term breastfeeding, including returning to work and finding the time and equipment needed to pump breast milk. About 60% of mothers stop breastfeeding sooner than they had planned, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

State and federal laws have been enacted to encourage breastfeeding by requiring break time and accommodations for mothers of infants.

Rates of breastfeeding have consistently been lower among Black babies than other groups. About three quarters of Black babies are breast fed only in infancy, below the national average of 84%, according to the CDC.

### **What should parents do if they are having trouble finding formula?**

Talk with your pediatrician or call a local food bank to see if they can help locate some options. Experts also recommend checking with smaller stores and pharmacies, which may still have supplies when larger stores run out.

Most regular baby formulas contain the same basic ingredients and nutrients, so parents should not hesitate to buy a different brand if they are having trouble finding their regular one.

Some infants require specialty formulas due to allergies, digestive problems and other medical conditions. Parents should talk to their doctor if they cannot find those products, which manufacturers usually distribute through pharmacies and clinics.

Families that qualify for WIC – a federal program similar to food stamps that pays for about half the formula used in the US – can also contact their local agency.

Health officials also warn against buying formula via social media websites or outside of conventional retailers because they could be counterfeit.

### **Why are parent told to not use make-your-own formula recipes online?**

Many do-it-yourself formula recipes are made from cow's milk and granular sugar that may be difficult for young babies to digest. They also lack the specific vitamins and proteins found in breastmilk and FDA-approved formulas that are needed for basic nutrition.

"Particularly for small babies, many of these formulas and mixtures that are found online don't contain even the most basic nutrient mixes that babies need to survive," said Dr Steven Abrams, a pediatrician at the University of Texas, Austin.

Abrams also stressed that parents should never dilute infant formula.

### **What are retailers doing to keep formula in stock?**

Several national chains have limited the number of containers customers can purchase in stores and online. For CVS and Walgreens, the limit is three per customer. Target limits purchases to four per person when buying online.

Amazon said Thursday it is working to keep the products available on its website and monitoring third-party sellers for price-gouging.



“If we identify a price that violates our policy, we remove the offer and take appropriate action with the seller,” a company spokesperson said in a statement.

#### **When are supplies likely to improve?**

Health regulators recently announced several steps designed to boost supply, including allowing faster importation of formula made overseas. Typically, 98% of baby formula consumed in the US is made domestically, according to federal officials.

The FDA is working with Abbott to fix the violations that triggered the shutdown of its Michigan plant, which produces Similac, EleCare and several other leading powdered formulas.

The company says its products have not been directly linked to the bacterial infections in children, pointing out that genetic samples collected from its factory did not match those found in several infants who got sick.

The Chicago-based company said this week that, pending FDA approval, it could restart manufacturing at its plant within two weeks. After that it would take another six to eight weeks before new products hit store shelves.

But even then, experts caution that many of the industrywide issues will continue to restrain supplies.

“This is going to be a problem and it’s not going away for at least a period of several months,” Abrams said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Kremlin warns ‘military-technical’ retaliation</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/finland-apply-join-nato-without-delay-president-pm">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/finland-apply-join-nato-without-delay-president-pm</a>
GIST	<p>Finland must apply to join Nato “without delay” in the wake of Russia’s attack on <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, its president and prime minister have said, signalling a historic shift in the country’s security policy that drew a blunt warning of retaliation from the Kremlin.</p> <p>With neighbouring Sweden expected to follow suit, Sauli Niinistö, Finland’s president, and Sanna Marin, the prime minister, made the call in a joint statement, adding: “We hope that the national steps still needed to make this decision will be taken rapidly within the next few days.”</p> <p>Nato membership would strengthen Finland’s security, the two leaders said, and as a member of <a href="#">Nato</a>, “Finland would strengthen the entire defence alliance. Finland must apply for Nato membership as a matter of urgency”.</p> <p>The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said <a href="#">Russia</a> would “definitely” see Finnish membership as a threat, and the foreign ministry in Moscow said it would have to take “military-technical” steps if Helsinki applied for Nato accession. “The expansion of Nato and the approach of the alliance to our borders does not make the world and our continent more stable and secure,” Peskov said. “Everything will depend on how this process takes place, how far the military infrastructure moves towards our borders.”</p> <p>Russia’s foreign ministry said Moscow would be “forced to take reciprocal steps ... to address the resulting threats to its national security”. It accused Nato of seeking to create “another flank for the military threat to our country” and said Helsinki should “be aware of its responsibility and the consequences of such a move”.</p> <p>The Finnish daily <i>Iltalehti</i> reported that key Finnish politicians had been told Russia could halt gas supplies to Finland on Friday, although it did not say where the warning came from or whether it was in response to the Nato announcement.</p>

Finland shares an 810-mile (1,300km) border with Russia and has for decades maintained a strict policy of military non-alignment, viewing membership of the US-led alliance as an unnecessary provocation of Moscow.

However, Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February has led to a profound change in its thinking, and looks likely to usher in the very expansion of the western military alliance that the Russian president aimed to prevent.

Public support for Nato membership has trebled in Finland, with the latest poll by the public broadcaster Yle showing 76% of Finns in favour compared with about 25% before the invasion, with only 12% against.

The president, prime minister and senior cabinet ministers will meet on Sunday to make the formal decision on submitting Finland's membership application. A positive decision would then be presented to parliament for approval early next week.

Sweden's ruling Social Democrats are scheduled to decide on Sunday whether to overturn their longstanding opposition to Nato membership, paving the way for a probable application from Stockholm also to join the 30-nation alliance.

Sweden's foreign minister, Ann Linde, said Niinistö and Marin's statement was "an important message", adding that Finland was "Sweden's closest security and defence partner" and its assessments "must be taken into account".

Sweden's Expressen daily, citing unnamed sources, said Stockholm's final decision would be made on Monday, with a formal application for membership to be submitted soon afterwards. Nordic media have previously said the two countries were likely to submit a joint application.

Nato's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said Finland would be "warmly welcomed" into the alliance and promised the accession process would be "smooth and swift", although ratification by all 30 members could take several months.

Finland is one of Nato's "closest partners, a mature democracy, a member of the European Union, and an important contributor to Euro-Atlantic security", Stoltenberg said, adding that Finnish membership would prove that the alliance's "door is open".

Russia has repeatedly warned Finland and Sweden against joining Nato, saying the "serious military and political consequences" of such a move would oblige it to "restore military balance" by strengthening its defences in the Baltic Sea region, including by deploying nuclear weapons.

Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian president, said on Thursday that western countries' "proxy war with Russia" would "increase the likelihood of a direct and open conflict between Nato and Russia".

Urging the west not to "lie to yourself and others" and "choke in the paroxysms of Russophobia", Medvedev said such a conflict "always has the risk of turning into a full-fledged nuclear war" and that this would be "catastrophic for everyone".

Other governments in the region, however, welcomed Helsinki's statement. Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said Finnish membership would "strengthen Nato and our common security". Copenhagen would do everything for a quick admission process, she said.

Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, tweeted his support, saying he had assured Niinistö of "the full support of the federal government" in a phone call. Estonia's prime minister, Kaja Kallas, said her country supported Finland's rapid accession.

	<p>Poland's prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, said Finland's decision was "great news for Poland and Europe's security", and the prime minister of the Czech Republic, Petr Fiala, said his country would "of course" support a Finnish application to join the alliance.</p> <p>Finland's foreign minister, Pekka Haavisto, told the European parliament accession to Nato would strengthen security in the region. Norway, Denmark and the three Baltic states were already Nato members and the addition of Finland would "bring added value", he said.</p> <p>Finland and Sweden are officially non-aligned but became Nato partners – taking part in exercises and exchanging intelligence – after abandoning their strict neutrality when they joined the EU in 1995 after the end of the cold war.</p> <p>Finland declared independence in 1917 after more than a century of Russian rule, and its heavily outnumbered army twice fought off Soviet forces during the second world war before ceding some border territory. Sweden has not fought a war for 200 years.</p> <p>Marin and her Swedish counterpart, Magdalena Andersson, said at a joint press conference last month that Russia's invasion of Ukraine had changed Europe's whole security landscape and "dramatically shaped mindsets" in the Nordic countries.</p> <p>Nato's common security guarantee rests on article 5, the alliance's cornerstone, which says an attack on one Nato member is an attack on all. It has been invoked only once in the organisation's history, in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Day 79 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/13/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-79-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/13/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-79-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A court in Kyiv <a href="#">will hear the first war crime trial</a> of the invasion. Vadim Shysimarin, 21, a commander in Russia's Kantemirovskaya tank division, is accused of shooting dead an unarmed man, 62, who was on a bicycle and talking on his phone in the village of Chupakhivka, Sumy. Shysimarin was ordered "to kill a civilian so he would not report them to Ukrainian defenders", according to prosecutors.</li> <li>• The Russian foreign ministry in Moscow said it would have to <b>take "military-technical" steps if Helsinki applied for Nato accession</b>, after Finland's president, Sauli Niinistö, and prime minister, Sanna Marin, said it must apply to join the military alliance "without delay". Sweden is expected to follow within days.</li> <li>• Russia could <b>cut its gas supplies to Finland on Friday</b>, a day after Finnish leaders said they would apply to join Nato, according to reports.</li> <li>• The Republican senator Rand Paul <b>has blocked the passage of a \$40bn aid bill for Ukraine in the US Senate</b>. Paul demanded changes including an inspector general to oversee how it is spent.</li> <li>• Michael Carpenter, the US ambassador to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), said that <b>"at least several thousand Ukrainians" have been sent to so-called "filtration centres" in Russia</b> where they are subject to "brutal interrogations". Tens of thousands more had been evacuated to Russia or Russia-controlled territory. Carpenter said that one survivor said "everyone was afraid to be taken to Donetsk", where they could be the victim of "further investigation or murder".</li> <li>• Urgent measures to break the <b>Russian blockade of grain exports from Ukraine's ports</b>, including by trying to open routes through Romania and the Baltic, are being discussed at a three-day meeting of G7 foreign and agriculture ministers in Germany. Before the war, most of the food produced by Ukraine – enough to feed 400 million people – was exported through its seven Black Sea ports.</li> <li>• Ukraine said it had <b>damaged and set on fire a Russian navy logistics ship in the Black Sea</b>. The Vsevolod Bobrov was near Snake Island, said Serhiy Bratchuk, a spokesman for the Odesa regional military administration in southern Ukraine. The Guardian could not independently verify the details and Russia's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ukraine's deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, said "very difficult negotiations" were ongoing to <b>evacuate 38 seriously wounded fighters from the besieged Azovstal steel plant</b> in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, in exchange for Russian prisoners of war. "We work step by step," he said. "We will exchange 38, then we will move on."</li> <li>The number of people who have <b>fled Ukraine to escape Russia's invasion has exceeded six million</b>, the UN's refugee agency has said. A further eight million people have been displaced inside Ukraine.</li> <li><b>Nearly 100 children were killed in Ukraine during April alone</b> but actual figures could be significantly higher, the United Nations children's fund has said. Unicef's deputy executive director, Omar Abdi, demanded an end to the bombing of Ukrainian schools, adding that one in six Unicef-supported schools in eastern Ukraine had been "damaged or destroyed" as of last week.</li> <li>European Union leaders plan to <b>assess Ukraine's membership next month</b>, according to the French foreign ministry.</li> <li>The UN's human rights council has passed a resolution to investigate <b>alleged abuses by Russian troops</b> in parts of Ukraine formerly under their control, with a view to holding those responsible to account. The resolution passed by a strong majority, with 33 members voting in favour and two – China and Eritrea – against. There were 12 abstentions.</li> <li>The UN human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, said <b>1,000 bodies had been recovered in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv</b>, in recent weeks. Many of the violations it is verifying since the Russian invasion may amount to war crimes, she said.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Russia troops refusing to fight in Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/they-were-furious-the-russian-soldiers-refusing-to-fight-in-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/they-were-furious-the-russian-soldiers-refusing-to-fight-in-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>When the soldiers of an elite Russian army brigade were told in early April to prepare for a second deployment to Ukraine, fear broke out among the ranks.</p> <p>The unit, stationed in Russia's far east during peacetime, first entered Ukraine from Belarus when the war started at the end of February and saw bitter combat with Ukrainian forces.</p> <p>"It soon became clear that not everyone was onboard with it. Many of us simply did not want to go back," said Dmitri, a member of the unit who asked not to be identified with his real name. "I want to return to my family – and not in a casket."</p> <p>Along with eight others, Dmitri told his commanders that he refused to rejoin the invasion. "They were furious. But they eventually calmed down because there wasn't much they could do," he said.</p> <p>He was soon transferred to Belgorod, a Russian city close to the border with Ukraine, where he has been stationed since. "I have served for five years in the army. My contract ends in June. I will serve my remaining time and then I am out of here," he said. "I have nothing to be ashamed of. We aren't officially in a state of war, so they could not force me to go."</p> <p>Dmitri's refusal to fight highlights some of the military difficulties the Russian army has faced as a result of the Kremlin's political decision not to formally declare war on Ukraine – preferring instead to describe the invasion, which will soon reach its fourth month, as a "special military operation".</p> <p>Under Russian military rules, troops who refuse to fight in Ukraine can face dismissal but cannot be prosecuted, said Mikhail Benyash, a lawyer who has been advising soldiers who choose that option.</p> <p>Benyash said "hundreds and hundreds" of soldiers had been in touch with his team for advice on how they could avoid being sent to fight. Among them were 12 national guardsmen from Russia's southern city of Krasnodar who were fired after refusing to go to Ukraine.</p>

“Commanders try to threaten their soldiers with prison time if they dissent, but we tell the soldiers that they can simply say no,” Benyash said, adding that he was not aware of any criminal cases against soldiers who refused to fight. “There are no legal grounds to start a criminal case if a soldier refuses to fight while on Russian territory.”

Many soldiers, therefore, have chosen to be fired or transferred rather than going into “the meat grinder”, he said.

A similar account to Dmitri’s was given to the BBC’s Russian service by Sergey Bokov, a 23-year-old soldier who at the end of April decided to leave the army after fighting in Ukraine. “Our commanders didn’t even argue with us because we were not the first ones to leave,” Bokov said.

Pointing to Russia’s military laws, Benyash said it would be more difficult for soldiers to refuse to fight if Russia were to declare a full-scale war. “During wartime, rules are totally different. Refusal then would mean much harsher penalties. They would be looking at time in prison.”

While the exact number of soldiers refusing to fight remains unclear, such stories illustrate what military experts and western governments say is one of Russia’s biggest obstacles in Ukraine: a severe shortage of infantry soldiers.

Moscow initially put about 80% of its main ground combat forces – 150,000 men – into the war in February, according to western officials. But significant damage has been done to that army, which has confronted logistical problems, poor morale and an underestimated Ukrainian resistance.

“Putin needs to make a decision regarding mobilisation in the coming weeks,” said Rob Lee, a military analyst. “Russia lacks sufficient ground units with contract soldiers for a sustainable rotation. The troops are getting exhausted – they won’t be able to keep this up for a long period.”

Lee said one option for the Kremlin would be to authorise the deployment of conscript units to Ukraine, despite Putin’s earlier pledges that Russia would not use any conscripts in the war. “Conscripts could fill some of the gaps, but they will be poorly trained. Many of the units that are supposed to train conscripts are fighting themselves,” Lee said.

But without conscript battalions, Russia could soon “struggle to hold the territory it currently controls in Ukraine, especially as Ukraine receives better equipment from Nato,” he said.

Russian authorities quietly stepped up their efforts to recruit new soldiers as it became clear that a quick victory in Ukraine was unattainable.

An investigation by the BBC’s Russian service showed that Russia’s defence ministry filled employment websites with vacancies, offering people with no combat experience opportunities to join the army on lucrative short-term contracts. Some large government-run companies have received letters urging them to sign up their staff for the army.

Russia has also turned to mercenaries to bolster its war efforts, deploying fighters from the shadowy Kremlin-linked Wagner group.

But analysts say voluntary recruits and mercenary groups are unlikely to lead to a substantial increase in the number of new soldiers, compared with the numbers that a partial or a full-scale mobilisation would bring.

Despite speculation beforehand, Putin did not formally declare war on Ukraine during his Victory Day speech on 9 May.

	<p>Andrei Kolesnikov, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment, said the authorities may be worried that a general mobilisation would antagonise large sections of the population that support the “special operation”.</p> <p>Russians “might be in favour of the conflict, but they don’t actually want to fight,” he said, adding that a general mobilisation would entail “colossal losses of untrained soldiers”.</p> <p>And while the current status of the conflict gives Russian soldiers a legal path to refuse participation, some soldiers have complained that it has also led to them not being adequately cared for.</p> <p>A junior sergeant said he was injured during one of the recent Ukrainian attacks on the Russian border territory where he was stationed. His superiors argued that he should not be given the monetary compensation of up to £2,500 that wounded Russians are entitled to by law because his injury took place on Russian soil – meaning it did not fall under the rules of Russia’s “special military operation”.</p> <p>“It is unfair, I am fighting in this war just as the others in Ukraine, risking my life,” the soldier said. “If I don’t get the compensation that I am entitled to soon, I will go public and make a major issue of it.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Zoos take steps protect birds from avian flu</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woodland-park-zoo-taking-steps-protect-birds-avian-flu-spreads/H4BIKYIJHZCFHHKX2CIURX3X6A/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woodland-park-zoo-taking-steps-protect-birds-avian-flu-spreads/H4BIKYIJHZCFHHKX2CIURX3X6A/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Seattle’s Woodland Park Zoo is taking steps to protect its birds from the highly contagious avian influenza, also known as bird flu, that has been confirmed in backyard flocks in western Washington, the zoo announced Thursday.</p> <p>The zoo has not seen any cases of the flu to date, but it has moved its most highly susceptible bird species to indoor or protective housing. These include raptors, peacocks, penguins, flamingos, cranes, chickens and related species, along with waterfowl like ducks, geese and swans.</p> <p>The zoo will also be suspending up-close contact exhibits with birds like owls, hawks and other raptors. The zoo’s Wildlife Theater will exclude free-flying birds from its program as well.</p> <p>“Because avian influenza is transmitted by contact with infected wild birds or with their fecal matter, moving our birds inside and away from any other birds is the safest control measure we can take,” said Dr. Tim Storms, director of animal health at Woodland Park Zoo. “This is an alarming disease for birds with a high mortality rate which requires proactive measures.”</p> <p>The Washington State Department of Agriculture announced Thursday that the total number of backyard flocks infected with the avian flu is six, as two more flocks were detected in Clallam County on Wednesday.</p> <p>The first detection of the bird flu in Washington occurred on May 5 in a backyard flock in Pacific County.</p> <p>Two days later, officials confirmed the state’s second detection of bird flu in a backyard flock in Spokane County.</p> <p>Point Defiance Zoo &amp; Aquarium began moving susceptible birds indoors last Friday, when bird flu was first confirmed in western Washington.</p> <p>The zoo’s popular penguin exhibit was empty on Thursday, with the water drained.</p> <p>“I think keeping the animals safe is the best way to go,” said zoo visitor Winter McLeod.</p> <p>The 15 penguins are staying indoors.</p>

	<p>“We want to make sure wild birds aren’t able to mingle with the penguins,” said Dr. Karen Wolf, Point Defiance Zoo &amp; Aquarium’s head veterinarian.</p> <p>She said crows or other birds can spread avian flu through fecal droppings or respiratory secretions.</p> <p>Northwest Trek Wildlife Park is also bringing in snowy owls and bald eagles.</p> <p>“We know many of our visitors will be disappointed they won’t be able to see birds that are most at risk of avian flu, especially our popular penguins and flamingos,” said Sheri Horiszny, chief operations officer at Woodland Park Zoo. “We are confident our visitors and members will understand we have our animals’ best interests in mind, and understand our decision to keep our birds indoors and protect them from the highly contagious and potentially deadly avian influenza.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Study: WA ranks last in job openings</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-job-openings/281-29f24b03-dd13-4608-ac65-2ab946a15968">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-job-openings/281-29f24b03-dd13-4608-ac65-2ab946a15968</a>
GIST	<p>LYNNWOOD, Wash. — A new <a href="#">study</a> comparing the number of job openings in each state has ranked Washington last with a rate of 6% since the fourth quarter of 2021.</p> <p>However, if it feels like you're still <a href="#">seeing a lot of "Help Wanted" signs</a>, you are not alone. Experts say it is still an employee's market.</p> <p>To break down why Washington is ranked last, labor economist Anneliese Vance-Sherman said it's not that there aren't jobs in Washington, but the growth rate compared to other states isn't as high.</p> <p>"We have a lot of sectors, especially in urban Washington, that had a lot of stability kind of built in from early on," said Vance-Sherman, who works with the Employment Security Department.</p> <p>At the beginning of the pandemic, Washington's leisure and hospitality industry lost 40% of its jobs in two months.</p> <p>Nationally, the same industry had a job openings rate of 10.5%, which is still higher than Washington's roughly 6%.</p> <p>"In Washington, we were buffered by having a very strong tech economy and a lot of workers that could do their jobs from home," said Vance-Sherman.</p> <p>With an <a href="#">unemployment rate</a> in Washington at 4.2%, officials in the North Sound say their businesses are struggling to find employees.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Officials: more bird flu outbreaks in flocks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/washington-state-confirms-two-more-bird-flu-outbreaks-six-in-one-week">https://komonews.com/news/local/washington-state-confirms-two-more-bird-flu-outbreaks-six-in-one-week</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. – Two more flocks have come down with the bird flu, according to Washington state officials.</p> <p>The two new flocks were found in Clallam County and makes it six identified outbreaks since a week ago.</p> <p>Washington State Department of Agriculture officials and state veterinarians are urging anyone with a flock to be hyper-vigilant.</p>



	<p>“With so many suspicious cases in domestic flocks and wild birds pending investigation, I can’t emphasize enough how important it is to avoid exposing your flock to wild waterfowl, shorebirds, and other domestic flocks,” state veterinarian Dr. Amber Itle said.</p> <p>The new HPAI cases come from non-commercial backyard flocks and were confirmed Wednesday. The flock owners called the sick bird hotline when multiple birds died or came down with the sickness.</p> <p>Neither flock is related, one had a dozen geese and the other had 10 chickens. Those still alive will be euthanized.</p> <p>Washington state says there are several other cases under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Health officials: not over; more deaths</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/us-deaths-from-covid-hit-1m-as-washington-health-officials-say-more-fatalities-expected">https://komonews.com/news/local/us-deaths-from-covid-hit-1m-as-washington-health-officials-say-more-fatalities-expected</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The global COVID pandemic has been blamed for one million deaths in the U.S. so far with the first reported case in the U.S. occurring in Western Washington two years ago.</p> <p>Dr. Francis Riedo has worked tirelessly during the pandemic, ever since late February in 2020.</p> <p>“Within five days we had 31 patients,” Riedo said, looking back at the start of the pandemic. “We were really the first large cluster of patients associated with a nursing home.”</p> <p>EvergreenHealth Medical Center in Kirkland was the spot where the first reported COVID-19 death occurred and Riedo has been hard at work ever since as the doctor and his colleagues have treated hundreds of patients following those busy weeks in 2020.</p> <p>“It’s sobering that here we are over two years later and we’re coming on over a million deaths,” he said.</p> <p>A million lives lost to this virus that Riedo and other health experts say will continue to evolve.</p> <p>“With each subsequent surge,” said Renee Rassilyer-Bomers, interim chief nursing officer for Swedish’s Puget Sound Central Region. “I think we just keep asking ourselves, ‘When will it end?’”</p> <p>For Rassilyer-Bomers, it's difficult to think that so many people have died from COVID.</p> <p>“It is staggering,” she said. “It makes you reflect.”</p> <p>But she knows that this isn't the end of the virus, and that UW’s IHME is projecting another 400 people will die by the fall.</p> <p>“This has been devastating,” said Dr. Ali Mokdad, professor of Health Metrics Sciences at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation and chief strategy officer for Population Health at the University of Washington.</p> <p>Mokdad says the difficult part is knowing many of the deaths linked to the coronavirus could have been prevented. But when looking to the future he says coming together and protecting one another from this virus will be crucial when we see breakthrough variants and other surges.</p> <p>“We owe it to those people who died. We owe it to those people who are suffering right now from COVID-19, long COVID, we owe it to do it right from now on,” said Mokdad.</p> <p>According to Riedo, one of the most difficult things to grasp is that hospitalizations at this point this year are almost as much as what we saw in all of 2020.</p>

HEADLINE	05/12 Downtown Seattle commuters: slow return
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/commuters-into-downtown-seattle-slow-to-return/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/commuters-into-downtown-seattle-slow-to-return/</a>
GIST	<p>Commutes into downtown Seattle are ticking up slowly as hybrid work arrangements and cautious office reopenings put off any mad dash to the pre-pandemic work routine, according to a new report from traffic analytics firm INRIX.</p> <p>The stagnation, even as nearly all coronavirus restrictions have been rolled back, raises the question of when or if workers will fill Seattle's core again. Bob Pishue, transportation analyst with INRIX, said their data shows no urgency to return and that it would behoove the city to consider how to draw more people downtown for reasons beyond just work.</p> <p>"As downtown businesses or chambers of commerce or government officials talk about how to get people back downtown, I think what we've determined from this report is they've got to look beyond the office," he said.</p> <p>Seattle is seeing 70% of the trips downtown as it did before the pandemic. That's a marked increase from a year earlier, when it was just 41% of commutes. But it's notable that many of the increases were borne out by last August, Pishue said. Since then, the city has only experienced single digit increases in commutes.</p> <p>"This is starting to seem like it's the new normal and I think that we should start kind of preparing for this," said Pishue.</p> <p>That's not to say that the roads are empty. Data from the Washington State Department of Transportation shows traffic volumes across the state are just 5% less than what they were pre-pandemic. And Pishue said INRIX is noting similar volume in the Seattle Metro area.</p> <p>But the nature of those trips has changed, suggesting people are taking more local or recreational trips and are not necessarily headed into the office.</p> <p>Most cities are still below pre-pandemic levels of commuting, according to INRIX's analysis. Seattle shares company with Dallas and Washington, D.C., at its 70% level.</p> <p>Two cities have met or exceeded 2019 commute numbers: Denver and Nashville. Nashville stands out, at 125% of pre-pandemic levels. Looking at the city's data, Pishue said you see large spikes on Friday and Saturday nights, a sign that the downtown core of Music City – or NashVegas to some – is itself an attraction. The number of people driving into downtown Seattle on Friday or Saturday night plummets.</p> <p>"Now, weather is different in Nashville than it is in Seattle than it is in New York," said Pishue. "There are other factors here, but we're just kind of laying it out there that, hey, based off of transportation data, we might be able to see what works, what doesn't work, sort of in real time."</p> <p>Seattle's downtown may be particularly vulnerable to a drop in commuters, with more than 11% of the metro area's jobs centered there. Much of that is due to Amazon, which hasn't demanded its workers return to the office.</p> <p>The commute data tracks with office trends, kept both locally and nationally. Although it doesn't follow Seattle's office occupancy, Kastle, a Washington, D.C., office security firm, found that similar cities have occupancy rates of around 33%.</p> <p>That number matches the Downtown Seattle Association's estimate that 33% of downtown workers are going to the office three or more days a week. Like INRIX commute data, the number of office workers has remained mostly flat since February.</p>

	<p>Jon Scholes, president and CEO of the Downtown Seattle Association, said he’s “bullish” on the return of office workers, especially as summer weather arrives and people find more reasons to leave their houses. Surveys of downtown businesses show more could soon push for workers to show up in person, he said.</p> <p>“The summer’s a great place to be downtown,” he said. “It’s a time when there’s lots of stuff to do, after work in particular.”</p> <p>Scholes said he doesn’t expect a full return to 2019 levels of in-person work, but said he still thinks downtown could see 70% capacity by fall.</p> <p>Transit ridership is still well below pre-pandemic levels, but has seen a more robust uptick in 2022. Sound Transit’s total ridership increased to 2.5 million riders in March, up from about 2 million in February and 1.8 million in January. Light rail drove most of the increase.</p> <p>King County Metro reported more than 240,000 average daily boardings in March, up from 177,000 in January.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Washington in new phase of pandemic?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/covid-cases-are-up-most-mandates-ended-months-ago-so-where-does-wa-stand/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/covid-cases-are-up-most-mandates-ended-months-ago-so-where-does-wa-stand/</a>
GIST	<p>A new phase of the pandemic. A lull between waves. A time of reflection.</p> <p>Scientists, politicians and public health leaders have spent the past few months using these phrases to describe where Washington stands in the battle against COVID-19. Now case rates are increasing once again, despite many people in recent weeks inching — or lunging — back toward pre-pandemic norms.</p> <p>Public transit is often crowded, restaurants and bars packed again. Last week, a record crowd of more than 68,000 (mostly unmasked) Sounders fans packed into Lumen Field for a championship game.</p> <p>But shifting public health guidance, the emergence of new variants and continued strain on hospitals has made it difficult for many to gauge their personal and community risk, leaving Washingtonians to wonder: Is this a new phase of the pandemic?</p> <p>“There’s a lot of uncertainty now,” said Renee Magnan, an associate professor of social and health psychology at Washington State University. “We’ve all heard of pandemic fatigue. People are really tired of having to do the things. ... And I can see that there’s frustration with how quickly, in some ways, recommendations have been changing.”</p> <p>Even when faced with frustration and fatigue, though, it’s hard to ignore the latest COVID trends, said Dr. Josh Schiffer, a vaccine and infectious diseases professor at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.</p> <p>“I can very much understand why people feel confused,” he said. “There’s a high incidence of cases, yet we’re not measuring cases with as much precision or care as we did before. It’s certainly a bit unsettling.”</p> <p>Where we are headed next is impossible to say. There is some hope in the recent numbers. The state recently recorded its lowest ever seven-day COVID death rate since the pandemic began, at 0.2 deaths per 100,000 residents.</p> <p>In March, Schiffer likened the end of indoor mask mandates to a “<a href="#">natural experiment</a>.” One effect of how the experiment is playing out, it seems, is a persistent uneasiness in everyday life.</p> <p><b>Recent trends</b></p>

When Gov. Jay Inslee in February [announced his plan to end indoor mask mandates](#), he said he was waiting for a state average of 5 COVID hospitalizations per 100,000 people — a threshold Washington met the first week of March.

By early April, the state's COVID hospitalization rate had fallen to about 1.9 per 100,000 over seven days. Since then, however, hospitalizations have slowly climbed back up, hitting about 4.5 hospitalizations per 100,000 at the end of April.

The levels are low in comparison to past surges, but state hospital leaders are “definitely concerned,” Beth Zborowski, spokesperson for the Washington State Hospital Association, said last week.

“The entire health care system remains fragile,” Zborowski said. “We still have staffing shortages and people are seeking care for things they’ve delayed. We’re encouraging people to follow public health guidance to slow the spread of this wave by wearing well-fitting masks indoors or to move gatherings outdoors if possible.”

Infections also continue to increase throughout the state.

Washington is averaging about 185 daily infections per 100,000 — or about 2,019 cases per day — far below its omicron peak of about 1,817 cases per 100,000 and at about half its delta peak last summer, about 333 cases per 100,000.

King County is recording an average of 1,000-plus new infections per day, a count that’s tripled since the start of April. The record-breaking winter surge of omicron cases still dwarfs current infection levels, according to the county’s data dashboard, but cases have passed the peak of the county’s delta wave last summer, which had a seven-day average of about [630 daily infections in late August](#).

The increase was anticipated, King County health officer [Dr. Jeff Duchin said last month](#), and is a sign to slow down on rolling back prevention measures. Still, the county has no plans to return to mandatory masking at this point.

“As always, it’s difficult to predict the extent and severity of future surges,” Duchin said in a statement Wednesday.

Cases are picking up elsewhere, too. Snohomish County last week joined Whatcom County in moving from a category of “low” community transmission risk to “medium” community risk, as [defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

In a news conference, Snohomish County’s top health officer, Dr. Chris Spitters, recommended increased COVID preventions for all residents, including consistent use of face masks, which are now “strongly recommended,” he said.

King County also [falls into the medium-risk category](#), while Pierce remains at the low-risk level.

Deaths statewide remain relatively low compared to the seven-day death rates of about 5.5 per 100,000 in January and 4 per 100,000 last summer.

### **New variants**

Omicron and its subvariants continue to make up the vast majority of virus circulating in Washington.

While the initial omicron strain sped through the state, shocking health experts by leading to unprecedented case and hospitalization numbers in a matter of weeks, the subvariants that emerged in different parts of the world since then [have spread at a much slower pace in Washington](#).

Omicron's BA.2 subvariant remains dominant, after outpacing the initial strain in recent months — a reminder that new variants continue to emerge and surpass previous ones, which virologists expect as the virus evolves.

BA.2 currently makes up about 93% to 96% of circulating variants, while its sublineage, BA.2.12.1, accounts for about 2 to 4%, according to the state Department of Health's (DOH) [weekly sequencing report](#). Other omicron lineages (ones not classified as variants of concern or variants being monitored) make up about 1.4%.

Scientists noticed BA.2.12.1 first start picking up in New York and Massachusetts and is estimated to be about 25% more transmissible than BA.2.

Two other omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, which have caused spikes in South Africa, are also circulating at low levels in the United States, [The New York Times reported](#) last week. Neither is a current concern in Washington.

Although omicron's subvariants appear to be more infectious, which would help explain the recent change in case trends, the illness they cause seems less severe, according to public health officials.

"It's fairly unsettling how quickly this version of omicron evolved to be even more contagious than the last version, and it's next to impossible to say when that will end and what that will look like," Schiffer said.

Trevor Bedford, a leading infectious disease scientist in Seattle who has tracked the virus's genome since the pandemic began, said in a webinar last month that he generally expects future viral evolution to occur in a gradual accumulation of mutations, similar to influenza viruses.

Some predictions aren't yet clear, however, and Bedford added that more targeted experiments are needed.

### **Ongoing prevention**

Despite changing state requirements, general safety recommendations have largely stayed the same: Get vaccinated and boosted, wear masks in crowded settings, improve indoor air ventilation and get tested before gatherings.

Washington state and the federal government [are still shipping free COVID rapid tests](#), which are in much greater supply now, according to DOH.

In March, Washington announced an expansion of its free test program ([sayyescovidhometest.org](#)) to allow up to two orders per household every month while supplies last. Last week, DOH confirmed it has 3.3 million tests on hand and more on the way.

The White House also expanded its program ([COVIDTests.gov](#)) in March to allow households to order a second batch of four more.

In addition, the state's exposure notification system, [known as WA Notify](#), is still running, gaining new activations every month, said Dr. Bryant Thomas Karras, DOH's chief medical informatics officer. As of this week, the program — which went live in November 2020 — reported more than 3.2 million activations, about 300,000 of which were turned on this year, Karras said.

Users who enable the system can receive notifications when they've been exposed to another user who tested positive for COVID. The program uses Bluetooth technology to anonymously exchange codes with other phones nearby — including strangers in public settings — and takes into account how close users are and for how long they might have been exposed to each other.

	<p>While the state is still encouraging use of its various disease prevention tools, it can be difficult to remember every single one, and harder yet to choose to use them diligently, said Magnan, the WSU health psychologist.</p> <p>“We’re really good at rationalizing our behavior,” she said. “You hear that a lot [with younger people, who are generally at less risk of severe illness]: ‘Well, I don’t need to do this and that because I’m under 20.’”</p> <p>The reaction is understandable, Magnan said, adding that preventative measures are often difficult to maintain over time.</p> <p>Still, she urged people to remember, “We’re trying to help one another. That can be hard to remember sometimes. It’s not just about ourselves.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Childhood immunization rates decline</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/wa-childhood-immunization-rates-decline-during-pandemic/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/wa-childhood-immunization-rates-decline-during-pandemic/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — A new report shows routine childhood immunization rates have decreased during the pandemic, dropping by 13% in 2021 when compared to pre-pandemic levels, according to Washington state health officials.</p> <p>The Washington State Department of Health said Thursday that in response, the Department of Health, health care providers and other agencies are working with people to catch up and remain current on routine immunizations.</p> <p>“The pandemic has been difficult for everyone. Disruptions to schooling, childcare and in-person health care made it hard for some families to stay up to date on their shots,” said Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, the state’s chief science officer. “We encourage parents and caregivers to schedule their well-child visits as soon as possible, to make sure their kids are happy, healthy, meeting developmental milestones, and ready for school.”</p> <p>The report, compiled by the Department of Health, compares routine childhood vaccination rates in Washington from 2021 to averages from 2015-2019.</p> <p>Rates were found to have declined the most in younger children, with vaccinations decreasing 9.6% in the 19-to-35-month age group. They decreased 3.9% in those ages 4 to 6 and decreased 3.6% for those ages 11 and 12.</p> <p>For teens ages 13 to 17, however, vaccinations increased 1.8%, state health officials said.</p> <p>Washington state provides all recommended childhood vaccines at no cost to children through the age of 18.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 King Co. property values rise: tax hike likely</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/king-county-property-values-rise-at-unprecedented-rates-tax-hikes-likely/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/king-county-property-values-rise-at-unprecedented-rates-tax-hikes-likely/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The region’s hot real estate market has led to “unprecedented” increases in home values that will drive up next year’s property tax bills, according to the King County assessor’s office.</p> <p>Home values are up all over the county, but particularly in Eastside areas such as Redmond (43% on average), Woodinville (44%) and Kirkland (44.5%). The Sammamish Plateau topped the list with a 52% increase from the previous year. That’s double the still eye-popping 26% increase in Federal Way.</p>



In Seattle, values are up 19% in Rainier Beach and 20% in Magnolia, according to the assessor's office, which released a sample of data Thursday but is still finalizing values in other areas.

The increases are significant, even for the overheated Seattle-area market.

The local market has taken off since early in the pandemic, spurred by a combination of few houses for sale, a flood of buyers taking advantage of low mortgage-interest rates, and a continuing influx of highly paid workers with stock options. That has driven up home prices across the region and worsened housing affordability. The median sale price for a single-family house in King County hit nearly \$1 million last month.

The value increases are likely to increase property taxes — but not quite yet.

This year's property tax bills are based on last year's assessed values, and these new values will determine next year's taxes. The assessor's office will mail out valuation notices starting this week.

The county hasn't yet determined next year's property tax bills, but the hottest local housing markets are likely to see "a double-digit increase," said King County Assessor John Wilson.

Property taxes won't increase at the same rate as property values [because of the way local taxes are calculated](#).

While it may seem unusual, rising property values don't always have a huge effect on property tax bills. Instead, local levies are usually the biggest cause of higher property taxes.

The assessor's office essentially determines how much property tax revenue is owed to various public agencies. The total amount the county generates can only increase by about [1%](#) each year, except for voter-approved tax increases such as school and parks levies. Then, to reach that total amount, the assessor determines how much to charge each property owner, based on the value of the property.

When values climb dramatically faster in some areas than others, property owners can see spikes in their bills as the county adjusts the proportional share of total taxes.

That's what will happen next year, Wilson said.

"It isn't a direct 'my value went up 30% so my taxes will go up 30%,' but when you hit this magnitude it has some impact," he said. "We don't want to kid the public."

The county's high assessments on the Eastside roughly echo home sales data from the Northwest Multiple Listing Service, [which The Seattle Times maps each month](#).

With mortgage rates on the uptick, the market has recently started to [show signs of cooling off](#). But county assessments are based on estimated values as of Jan. 1.

For many homeowners, rising home values have brought [higher net worth](#) and, if they want to sell, [a chance to cash out](#). At the same time, higher property taxes can also strain lower-income homeowners who bought long before values climbed or tenants whose landlords cite property taxes to justify rent hikes.

King County offers property tax reductions for [certain seniors and people with disabilities](#), but that program has been overwhelmed with applications, forcing people to [wait months for a decision](#).

Property owners can appeal their valuation within [60 days](#) of the date on the card they receive in the mail. Find more information about exemptions and appeals at [kingcounty.gov/depts/assessor](http://kingcounty.gov/depts/assessor).

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsweek.com/russia-casualties-belgorod-shelling-attack-ukraine-invasion-1705880">https://www.newsweek.com/russia-casualties-belgorod-shelling-attack-ukraine-invasion-1705880</a>
GIST	<p>Russia said Thursday one person was killed and seven people were injured as a result of shelling by Ukrainian forces in a village in its Belgorod region bordering Ukraine.</p> <p>Ukraine was accused a day earlier of shelling the village of Solokhi in the southwest of the <a href="#">Belgorod region</a>, near the border with Ukraine.</p> <p>Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of the Russian province, said earlier that one person had been killed and six were wounded, but provided a casualty update on his Telegram channel Thursday morning.</p> <p>"Seven wounded, another victim was brought late at night. Everyone is provided with qualified medical care, medicines are available in full. One person died. We will provide material assistance to all the victims and the family of the deceased," Gladkov said.</p> <p>The governor said gas supply in the village that had been disrupted was restored.</p> <p>Gladkov said Wednesday's shelling was "the most severe to date" and that an apartment building had been destroyed, according to Russia's state-run news agency TASS. Residents of the village were evacuated "to a safe place," he said.</p> <p>A teenage boy was among those wounded in the attack and taken to a local hospital, Gladkov said.</p> <p>Newsweek has been unable to independently verify the incident or the alleged casualties.</p> <p>Russia in recent days has accused Ukrainian forces of ramping up attacks in Belgorod and other regions bordering Ukraine, and has warned such attacks risk an escalation of Moscow's ongoing invasion against the neighboring country.</p> <p>Responding to a separate incident last month where Ukrainian forces were accused of attacking a village in the province, Ukraine's military said, "These are baseless accusations by Russia."</p> <p>"Ukraine is conducting a defence operation on its territory and is fighting exclusively against the Russian occupiers, not against civilians," the military said on April 19.</p> <p>Russia last month also accused Ukraine of carrying out a helicopter attack on a fuel depot and launching missiles at an ammunition depot in the province, both of which Ukraine denied.</p> <p>It comes nearly three months after Russian President Vladimir Putin first ordered his troops into Ukraine to carry out what he calls a "special military operation" to demilitarize and "denazify" the country.</p> <p>Russian state-run news agency Interfax has reported that since the beginning of Putin's invasion, Kyiv has launched multiple attacks on the Belgorod region, and that more than 200 buildings have been damaged.</p> <p>Several mysterious fires have also broken out in the region in recent weeks. Ukrainian authorities have not officially claimed responsibility for the blazes, which remain under investigation by Russian authorities.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Covid 'tragic milestone': 1M deaths in US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/biden-covid-health-africa-pandemics-8135c845f812f5047520ffc9b9df80ff">https://apnews.com/article/biden-covid-health-africa-pandemics-8135c845f812f5047520ffc9b9df80ff</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden appealed to world leaders at a COVID-19 summit Thursday to reenergize a lagging international commitment to attacking the virus as he led the U.S. in marking the "tragic milestone" of 1 million deaths in America. He ordered flags lowered to half-staff and warned against complacency around the globe.</p>

“This pandemic isn’t over,” Biden declared at the second global pandemic summit. He spoke solemnly of the once-unthinkable U.S. toll: “1 million empty chairs around the family dinner table.”

The coronavirus has killed more than 999,000 people in the U.S. and at least 6.2 million people globally since it emerged in late 2019, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Other counts, including by the American Hospital Association, American Medical Association and American Nurses Association, have the toll at 1 million.

“Today, we mark a tragic milestone here in the United States, 1 million COVID deaths,” he said.

The president called on Congress to urgently provide billions of dollars more for testing, vaccines and treatments, something lawmakers have been unwilling to deliver so far.

That lack of funding — Biden has requested an additional \$22.5 billion in what he calls critically needed money — is a U.S. reflection of faltering resolve that jeopardizes the global response to the pandemic, he says.

Eight months after he used the first COVID summit to announce an ambitious pledge to donate 1.2 billion vaccine doses to the world, the urgency of the U.S. and other nations to respond has waned.

Momentum on vaccinations and treatments has faded even as more infectious variants rise and billions of people across the globe remain unprotected.

Biden addressed the opening of the virtual summit Thursday morning with recorded remarks and made the case that tackling COVID-19 “must remain an international priority.” The U.S. is co-hosting the summit along with Germany, Indonesia, Senegal and Belize.

“This summit is an opportunity to renew our efforts to keep our foot on the gas when it comes to getting this pandemic under control and preventing future health crises,” Biden said.

The U.S. has shipped nearly 540 million vaccine doses to more than 110 countries and territories, according to the State Department — far more than any other donor nation.

The leaders announced about \$3 billion in new commitments to fight the virus, along with a host of new programs meant to boost access to vaccines and treatments around the world. But that was a far more modest outcome than at last year’s meeting.

“At the global level, all countries, big or small, rich or poor, must have equal access to health solutions,” Indonesian President Joko Widodo said in his remarks.

After the delivery of more than 1 billion vaccines to the developing world, the problem is no longer a lack of shots but of logistical support to get doses into arms. According to government data, more than 680 million donated vaccine doses have been left unused in developing countries because they were expiring and couldn’t be administered quickly enough. As of March, 32 poorer countries had used less than half of the COVID-19 vaccines they were sent.

U.S. assistance to promote and facilitate vaccinations overseas dried up earlier this year, and Biden has requested about \$5 billion for the effort through the rest of the year.

“We have tens of millions of unclaimed doses because countries lack the resources to build out their cold chains, which basically is the refrigeration systems, to fight disinformation and to hire vaccinators,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said this week.

“We’re going to continue to fight for more funding here,” Psaki said. “But we will continue to press other countries to do more to help the world make progress as well.”

Congress has balked at the price tag for COVID-19 relief and has thus far refused to take up the package because of political opposition to the impending end of pandemic-era migration restrictions at the U.S.-Mexico border. Even after a consensus for virus funding briefly emerged in March, lawmakers decided to strip out the global aid funding and solely focus the assistance on shoring up U.S. supplies of vaccine booster shots and therapeutics.

Biden has warned that without Congress acting, the U.S. could lose out on access to the next generation of vaccines and treatments, and that the nation won't have enough supply of booster doses or the antiviral drug Paxlovid for later this year. He's also sounding the alarm that more variants will spring up if the U.S. and the world don't do more to contain the virus globally.

In an interview Thursday with The Associated Press, White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha pressed the need for the U.S. to fund global vaccination efforts as a way to protect Americans at home, warning that strains like delta and omicron first sprang up overseas.

"All of these variants were first identified outside of the United States," he said. "If the goal is to protect the American people, we have got to make sure the world is vaccinated. There's just no domestic-only approach here."

Demand for COVID-19 vaccines has dropped in some countries as infections and deaths have declined globally in recent months, particularly as the omicron variant has proved to be less severe than earlier versions of the disease. For the first time since it was created, the U.N.-backed COVAX effort has "enough supply to enable countries to meet their national vaccination targets," according Dr. Seth Berkley, CEO of the vaccines alliance Gavi, which fronts COVAX.

Still, despite more than 65% of the world's population receiving at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, less than 16% of people in poor countries have been immunized. It is highly unlikely countries will hit the World Health Organization target of vaccinating 70% of all people by June.

In countries including Cameroon, Uganda and the Ivory Coast, officials have struggled to get enough refrigerators to transport vaccines, send enough syringes for mass campaigns and get enough health workers to inject the shots. Experts also point out that more than half of the health workers needed to administer the vaccines in poorer countries are either underpaid or not paid at all.

Donating more vaccines, critics say, would miss the point entirely.

"It's like donating a bunch of fire trucks to countries that are on fire, but they have no water," said Ritu Sharma, a vice president at the charity CARE, which has helped immunize people in more than 30 countries, including India, South Sudan and Bangladesh.

"We can't be giving countries all these vaccines but no way to use them," she said, adding that the same infrastructure that got the shots administered in the U.S. is now needed elsewhere.

Sharma said greater investment also is needed to counter vaccine hesitancy in developing countries where there are entrenched beliefs about the potential dangers of Western-made medicines.

Gavi's Berkley also said that countries are increasingly asking for the pricier messenger RNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna, which are not as easily available as the AstraZeneca vaccine, which made up the bulk of COVAX's supply last year.

Variants like delta and omicron have led many countries to switch to mRNA vaccines, which seem to provide more protection and are in greater demand globally than traditionally made vaccines like those from China and Russia.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2022/5/two-million-confirmed-deaths-from-covid-19-in-the-european-region2">https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2022/5/two-million-confirmed-deaths-from-covid-19-in-the-european-region2</a>
GIST	<p>A grim milestone has passed as reported confirmed COVID-19 deaths from countries in the WHO European Region have exceeded 2 million people. While this number is devastating, it represents a fraction of the overall deaths directly and indirectly associated with COVID-19, as WHO's report on excess mortality during the pandemic has shown.</p> <p>While case numbers are declining in the Region, they remain far too high. COVID-19 continues to remind us that SARS-CoV-2 is still a killer virus, especially for the unvaccinated and clinically vulnerable.</p> <p>Together we can exit the acute phase of this pandemic if we take definitive steps on multiple fronts, both now and in the long term. These include protecting the most vulnerable, continuing to monitor the virus and its spread, keeping health systems ready for any developments of the pandemic, and tackling its long-term impacts – including the looming prospect of millions of people with post-COVID condition, or long COVID.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Finland, Sweden NATO enlargement?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-nato-sweden-0df5efbacd3102aeaa72b839b690c2d6">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-nato-sweden-0df5efbacd3102aeaa72b839b690c2d6</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (AP) — It's likely to be the quickest NATO enlargement ever and one that would redraw Europe's security map. <a href="#">Finnish leaders announced Thursday</a> their belief that Finland should join the world's biggest military organization because of <a href="#">Russia's war in Ukraine</a>. Sweden could soon follow suit.</p> <p>Should they apply for membership, the move would have far-reaching ramifications for Northern Europe and trans-Atlantic security.</p> <p>No doubt, it will also anger their large neighbor Russia, which blames, at least in part, its war in Ukraine on NATO's continued expansion closer to its borders. It's unclear how Russian President Vladimir Putin might retaliate. The Kremlin said Thursday that it certainly won't improve European security.</p> <p>The following is a brief look at what Finland and Sweden's membership in the 30-country NATO alliance could mean, with the Nordic partners expected to announce their intention to join within days.</p> <p><b>FINLAND AND SWEDEN</b></p> <p>Not neutral like Switzerland, Finland and Sweden traditionally think of themselves as militarily "nonaligned."</p> <p>But Russia's war in Ukraine and Putin's apparent desire to establish a Moscow-centered "sphere of influence" has shaken their security notions to the core. Just days after he ordered the Feb. 24 invasion, public opinion shifted dramatically.</p> <p>Support in Finland for NATO membership has hovered around 20-30% for years. It now stands at over 70%. The two are NATO's closest partners but maintaining good ties with Russia has been an important part of their foreign policy, particularly for Finland.</p> <p>Now they hope for security support from NATO states — primarily the United States — in case Moscow retaliates. <a href="#">Britain pledged on Wednesday</a> to come to their aid.</p> <p><b>THE NORDIC REGION</b></p> <p>NATO membership for the two, joining regional neighbors Denmark, Norway and Iceland, would formalize their joint security and defense work in ways that their Nordic Defense Cooperation pact hasn't.</p> <p>NORDEFECO, as it's known, focuses on cooperation. Working within NATO means putting forces under joint command.</p>

Accession would tighten the strategic Nordic grip on the Baltic Sea — Russia’s maritime point of access to the city of St. Petersburg and its Kaliningrad exclave.

Finland and Sweden also join them, along with Iceland, at the heart of the triangle formed with the North Atlantic and maritime areas in the Arctic, to where Russia projects its military might from the northern Kola Peninsula. Integrated NATO military planning will become a lot simpler, making the region easier to defend.

#### NATO

Finland and Sweden are NATO’s closest partners. They contribute to the alliance’s operations and air policing.

Most importantly, they already meet NATO’s membership criteria, on functioning democracies, good neighborly relations, clear borders and armed forces that are in lock-step with the allies. After the invasion, they formally boosted information exchanges with NATO and sit in on every meeting on war issues.

Both are modernizing their armed forces and investing in new equipment. Finland is purchasing dozens of high-end F-35 warplanes. Sweden has top quality fighter jets, the Gripen.

Finland says it’s already hit NATO’s defense spending guideline of 2% of gross domestic product. Sweden too is ramping up its military budget and expects to reach the target by 2028. The NATO average was estimated at 1.6% last year.

#### RUSSIA

Putin has demanded that NATO stop expanding and in his May 9 speech blamed the West for the war. But public opinion in Finland and Sweden suggests that he has driven them into NATO’s arms.

If Finland joins, it would double the length of the alliance’s border with Russia, adding a further 1,300 kilometers (830 miles) for Moscow to defend.

Putin has promised a “military, technical” response if they join. But many troops from Russia’s western district near Finland were sent to Ukraine, and those units suffered heavy casualties, Western military officers say.

So far, Moscow is doing nothing obvious to dissuade the two — apart perhaps from a couple of incidents where Russian planes entered their airspace. The Kremlin said Thursday that its response could depend on how close NATO infrastructure moves toward Russia’s borders.

Some at NATO worry that the Russians might deploy nuclear weapons or more hypersonic missiles to the Kaliningrad exclave, across the Baltic Sea wedged between allies Poland and Lithuania.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Sri Lanka reappoints 5-time former PM</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/sri-lanka-appoints-wickremesinghe-pm-effort-quell-crisis-rcna28530">https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/sri-lanka-appoints-wickremesinghe-pm-effort-quell-crisis-rcna28530</a>
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Five-time <a href="#">former Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe</a> was <a href="#">reappointed</a> Thursday in an effort to bring stability to the island nation, <a href="#">engulfed in a political and economic crisis</a>.</p> <p>Wickremesinghe, a contentious choice by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, took his oath in a ceremony at the president’s residence. Protesters have blocked the entrance to the president’s office for more than a month.</p> <p>The president’s brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, resigned as prime minister on Monday following violent attacks by supporters on peaceful anti-government protesters. His resignation automatically dissolved the Cabinet, leaving an administrative vacuum.</p>

The president's selection of Wickremesinghe, 73, is an attempt to end violence triggered by the crisis and restore international credibility as the government negotiates a bailout package with the International Monetary Fund.

On Wednesday, authorities deployed armored vehicles and troops in the streets of the capital after attacks on protesters triggered a wave of violence across the country. Nine people died and more than 200 were injured.

Security forces have been ordered to shoot people deemed to be participating in the violence, as sporadic acts of arson and vandalism continue despite a strict nationwide curfew that began Monday evening.

For weeks, protesters have been demanding that both Rajapaksas resign over a debt crisis that has nearly bankrupted the country and caused severe shortages of fuel, food and other essentials.

Some opposition politicians and religious leaders objected to Wickremesinghe's appointment, saying citizens wanted sweeping reforms.

Opposition lawmaker Anura Dissanayake said the choice of Wickremesinghe was more about protecting the president and his family from public anger over his role in the economic crisis than solving the country's problems.

When he was previously foreign minister from 2015 to 2019, Wickremesinghe was accused of protecting Rajapaksa's powerful family from allegations of corruption and other wrongdoing.

Buddhist and Catholic clergy also objected to Wickremesinghe's selection.

"This decision has been taken totally disregarding the aspirations of the people who are protesting today. The protests can only get worse by this decision," said the Rev. Omalpe Sobitha a senior Buddhist monk.

Catholic Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said for the country to move forward from the crisis, "we need a complete change of the system."

Political analyst Ranga Jayasuriya said by appointing Wickremesinghe as prime minister, "President Gotabaya Rajapaksa did not put out the fire, but added fuel on it."

"People would be angrier with this snub of appointing a man who has no public support," Jayasuriya tweeted.

U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung said she is looking forward to working with Wickremesinghe, and that his appointment and "the quick formation of an inclusive government are first steps to addressing the crisis and promoting stability."

"We encourage meaningful progress at the IMF and long-term solutions that meet the needs of all Sri Lankans," she said in a tweet.

Sri Lanka is nearly bankrupt and has suspended repayments of \$7 billion in foreign loans due this year. The IMF has said any short or long-term assistance depends on the outcome of talks with creditors on loan restructuring. Sri Lanka must repay about \$25 billion in foreign loans by 2026 out of a current total foreign debt of \$51 billion.

The finance ministry said earlier this month that the country's usable foreign reserves have plummeted to \$25 million.

	The foreign currency shortage has forced a sharp decline in imports, leading to severe shortages of essentials such as fuel, cooking gas, food and medicine. For months, people have had to stand in long lines to buy limited supplies, with many returning empty-handed.
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Mystery: another oligarch suspicious death</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220512-another-russian-tycoon-dies-under-suspicious-circumstances">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220512-another-russian-tycoon-dies-under-suspicious-circumstances</a>
GIST	<p>A former top manager of LUKoil, Aleksandr Subbotin, has reportedly died under strange circumstances, the latest in a series of mysterious deaths of Russian businessmen since Moscow launched its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on 24 February.</p> <p>Citing sources close to the Moscow regional police on 9 May, media reported that forensic tests were held to find possible drugs in Subbotin's body, which was found in a basement in a house in the town of Mytishchi near the Russian capital on 8 May.</p> <p>According to the sources, the owner of the house where the billionaire's body was found, Aleksei Pindyurin, also known as Shaman Magua, testified to police that Subbotin came to his house under the influence of alcohol and drugs seeking a ritual he often asked Pindyurin to perform to relieve hangover symptoms.</p> <p>Less than three weeks ago, on 21 April, Vagit Alekperov, the founder and co-owner of LUKoil — Russia's largest private oil company — resigned after he and other Russian tycoons were hit by sanctions by Australia and the United Kingdom over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The same day, media reports in Spain reported that a former top manager at Russian gas giant Novatek, Sergei Protosenya, his wife, and daughter had been found dead in a rented villa in the town of Lloret de Mar near Barcelona two days earlier.</p> <p>The 55-year-old millionaire was found hanged, while his wife and daughter had been stabbed to death in the villa, police were quoted as saying.</p> <p>On 18 April, Vladislav Avayev, a former vice president of one of Russia's leading financial institutions, Gazprombank, was found dead in his Moscow apartment together with the bodies of his wife and daughter.</p> <p>Police said at the time that the apartment was locked from the inside and a pistol was found in Avayev's hands, leading them to conclude that Avayev shot his wife and his teenage daughter before killing himself.</p> <p>On 24 March, another Russian billionaire, Vasily Melnikov, who owned the medical-supply company MedStom, his wife, and two sons were found stabbed to death in their apartment in the city of Nizhny Novgorod.</p> <p>On 28 February, Russian tycoon Mikhail Watford was found hanged in the garage of his home in Surrey in the United Kingdom. U.K. officials said at the time there were no signs of a foul play.</p> <p>On 25 February, the day after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, a top manager of Russia's Gazprom energy giant, Aleksandr Tyulyakov, was found hanged in the garage of his house near St. Petersburg. Police said at the time that they found a suicide note next to the body.</p> <p>Another top Gazprom executive, Leonid Shulman, was found dead in a cottage near St. Petersburg in January, weeks before Russia began its invasion. A suicide note was also found next to his body.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Beijing slams criticism of cardinal's arrest</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://hongkongfp.com/2022/05/12/a-political-show-beijing-hits-back-at-western-criticism-of-hong-kong-national-security-arrests/">https://hongkongfp.com/2022/05/12/a-political-show-beijing-hits-back-at-western-criticism-of-hong-kong-national-security-arrests/</a>
GIST	<p>Beijing has hit back at western criticism of Hong Kong's latest arrest of activists, including a 90-year-old Catholic cardinal, accusing them of "smearing" and putting on a "political show."</p> <p>China's Foreign Ministry in Hong Kong "expresses strong disapproval and opposition, emphasising that 'rights and freedoms' are not a 'shield' for illegal activities in Hong Kong," a statement published on Thursday read. "[The ministry] urges foreign forces that are intervening to immediately stop their clumsy political show filled with ideological biases."</p> <p>Cardinal Joseph Zen, barrister Margaret Ng, singer-activist Denise Ho, and scholar Hui Po-keung were <a href="#">released on bail</a> late Wednesday.</p> <p>They were trustees of the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which supported thousands of protesters during the 2019 unrest by providing legal assistance, funds for psychological counselling and medical treatment and emergency relief.</p> <p>"We urge the relevant countries and politicians to recognise the situation, pull back before it's too late... immediately stop intervening in Hong Kong and China's affairs, and do not further down this road that is doomed to fail," the ministry's statement read.</p> <p>National security police confirmed late on Wednesday that they <a href="#">had arrested four people</a> for alleged conspiracy to collude with foreign powers.</p> <p>Western politicians, rights groups and activists have denounced the move.</p> <p>The US State Department spokesperson, Ned Price, said the arrests "again" showed that Hong Kong authorities "will pursue all means necessary to stifle dissent and undercut protected rights and freedoms."</p> <p>US senators Jeff Merkley and James McGovern, of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, said: "The sad trajectory of this once vibrant financial hub remains a concern of this Commission, the US Congress, and all countries committed to the protection of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms."</p> <p>Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said he was following the situation "with great concern."</p> <p>"The fundamental freedoms, as guaranteed in the Hong Kong Basic Law and in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, must be respected," he said, referring to the treaty signed between China and the U.K. stating that the city will maintain certain freedoms following the 1997 handover.</p> <p>The former British colony's last governor Chris Patten called the arrest of Zen "yet another example of how the Chinese Communist Party is hellbent on turning Hong Kong into a police state."</p> <p>The 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund ceased operating last year after police <a href="#">said they were conducting</a> a national security probe into it.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Ukraine troops in counteroffensive</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-troops-reach-russia-border-invasion-reversed-1705900">https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-troops-reach-russia-border-invasion-reversed-1705900</a>
GIST	<p>The Ukrainian counteroffensive appears to have pushed Russian troops past the Ukrainian village of Ternova and back to the Russian border, according to unverified reports in both <i>Forbes</i> and the <i>Daily Mail</i>.</p> <p>If confirmed, a retreat of the Russian troops from the area around Kharkiv would be a significant success for Ukraine, freeing up troops to fight in the south of the country and giving respite to the devastated city</p>

of Kharkiv. On the other hand, a Russian retreat would be a terrible humiliation for Moscow and yet another setback in the invasion of Ukraine, merely weeks after troops retreated from the areas surrounding Kyiv in early April under the Kremlin's order.

U.S.-based think tank the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) said in its latest update on the unfolding war that Ukrainian forces have gained ground northeast of Kyiv as of May 11, forcing Russian troops "onto the defensive" and adding pressure for the Russians to seek reinforcement.

The ISW does not mention that Ukrainian troops have already advanced so much as to push back the enemy to the Russian border, but last weekend it declared that it could be a matter of days or weeks before that happens.

The British Ministry of Defence (MoD) wrote in its latest intelligence update dated May 12 that Ukrainian forces have recaptured several towns and villages towards the Russian border. It also confirmed that Russian troops were backing off and withdrawing units from the Kharkiv region to "reorganize and replenish its forces following heavy losses."

"The withdrawal of Russian forces from the Kharkiv Oblast is a tacit recognition of Russia's inability to capture key Ukrainian cities where they expected limited resistance from the population," the MoD wrote.

In British intelligence's assessment of the situation, once Russia reconstitutes its units, these forces will be likely deployed to the eastern bank of the Siverskyi Donets River to protect the troops' main supply routes near Izyum.

Reinforcing troops northeast of Kyiv to fight off the Ukrainian counteroffensive would prevent Russia from boosting offensive in other areas of the country, which would play in favor of Ukraine.

The [General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine](#) confirmed in its latest report on the Russian invasion that Russian troops near Kharkiv have not conducted any offensive in the last 24 hours but have moved to the defense.

The claims that Ukrainian troops pushed the enemy back to the Russian border are still unconfirmed, but they are in line with the latest updates from the north-eastern front.

On May 10, Russian news agency Readovka wrote on Telegram that Ukrainian troops were "not far" from the village of Vovchansk, which sits less than 7 miles away from the Russian border. The claims were not verified.

Ukrainian troops claim to have liberated a number of villages and towns in the heart of the Kharkiv region in the past few weeks, including the village of Ruska Lozova.

The war has now been ongoing for over two months, whereas many observers and intelligence experts believed Russia could have overwhelmed Ukraine in a matter of days. To this day, Moscow troops have failed to conquer any significant target in the country, and the war is widely expected to drag on.

*Newsweek* has contacted Ukraine's Ministry of Defense and Russia's Ministry of Defense for comment.

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HEADLINE	05/12 EPIC, LEIA law enforcement data breach?
SOURCE	<a href="https://krebsonsecurity.com/2022/05/dea-investigating-breach-of-law-enforcement-data-portal/">https://krebsonsecurity.com/2022/05/dea-investigating-breach-of-law-enforcement-data-portal/</a>
GIST	The <b>U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration</b> (DEA) says it is investigating reports that hackers gained unauthorized access to an agency portal that taps into 16 different federal law enforcement databases. KrebsOnSecurity has learned the alleged compromise is tied to a cybercrime and online harassment community that routinely impersonates police and government officials to harvest personal information on their targets.

On May 8, KrebsOnSecurity received a tip that hackers obtained a username and password for an authorized user of [esp.usdoj.gov](https://esp.usdoj.gov), which is the **Law Enforcement Inquiry and Alerts** (LEIA) system managed by the DEA.

KrebsOnSecurity shared information about the allegedly hijacked account with the DEA, the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** (FBI), and the **Department of Justice**, which houses both agencies. The DEA declined to comment on the validity of the claims, issuing only a brief statement in response.

“DEA takes cyber security and information of intrusions seriously and investigates all such reports to the fullest extent,” the agency said in a statement shared via email.

According to [this page](#) at the Justice Department website, LEIA “provides federated search capabilities for both EPIC and external database repositories,” including data classified as “law enforcement sensitive” and “mission sensitive” to the DEA.

A [document published by the Obama administration in May 2016](#) (PDF) says the DEA’s [El Paso Intelligence Center](#) (EPIC) systems in Texas are available for use by federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement, as well as the Department of Defense and intelligence community.

EPIC and LEIA also have access to the DEA’s **National Seizure System** (NSS), which the DEA uses to identify property thought to have been purchased with the proceeds of criminal activity (think fancy cars, boats and homes seized from drug kingpins).

“The **EPIC System Portal (ESP)** enables vetted users to remotely and securely share intelligence, access the National Seizure System, conduct data analytics, and obtain information in support of criminal investigations or law enforcement operations,” the 2016 White House document reads. “Law Enforcement Inquiry and Alerts (LEIA) allows for a federated search of 16 Federal law enforcement databases.”

The screenshots shared with this author indicate the hackers could use EPIC to look up a variety of records, including those for motor vehicles, boats, firearms, aircraft, and even drones.

Claims about the purloined DEA access were shared with this author by “**KT**,” the current administrator of the **Doxbin** — a highly toxic online community that provides a forum for digging up personal information on people and posting it publicly.

As KrebsOnSecurity reported earlier this year, the previous owner of the Doxbin has been [identified as the leader](#) of **LAPSUS\$**, a data extortion group that hacked into some of the world’s largest tech companies this year — including Microsoft, NVIDIA, Okta, Samsung and T-Mobile.

That reporting also showed how the core members of LAPSUS\$ were involved in [selling a service offering fraudulent Emergency Data Requests](#) (EDRs), wherein the hackers use compromised police and government email accounts to file warrantless data requests with social media firms, mobile telephony providers and other technology firms, attesting that the information being requested can’t wait for a warrant because it relates to an urgent matter of life and death.

From the standpoint of individuals involved in filing these phony EDRs, access to databases and user accounts within the Department of Justice would be a major coup. But the data in EPIC would probably be far more valuable to organized crime rings or drug cartels, said **Nicholas Weaver**, a researcher for the [International Computer Science Institute](#) at **University of California, Berkeley**.

Weaver said it’s clear from the screenshots shared by the hackers that they could use their access not only to view sensitive information, but also submit false records to law enforcement and intelligence agency databases.

“I don’t think these [people] realize what they got, how much money the cartels would pay for access to this,” Weaver said. “Especially because as a cartel you don’t search for yourself you search for your enemies, so that even if it’s discovered there is no loss to you of putting things ONTO the DEA’s radar.”

## ANALYSIS

The login page for esp.usdoj.gov (above) suggests that authorized users can access the site using [a “Personal Identity Verification” or PIV card](#), which is a fairly strong form of authentication used government-wide to control access to federal facilities and information systems at each user’s appropriate security level.

However, the EPIC portal also appears to accept just a username and password, which would seem to radically diminish the security value of requiring users to present (or prove possession of) an authorized PIV card. Indeed, KT said the hacker who obtained this illicit access was able to log in using the stolen credentials alone, and that at no time did the portal prompt for a second authentication factor.

It’s not clear why there are still sensitive government databases being protected by nothing more than a username and password, but I’m willing to bet big money that this DEA portal is not only offender here. The DEA portal esp.usdoj.gov is listed on *Page 87* of [a Justice Department “data inventory.”](#) which catalogs all of the data repositories that correspond to DOJ agencies.

*There are 3,330 results.* Granted, only some of those results are login portals, but that’s just within the Department of Justice.

If we assume for the moment that state-sponsored foreign hacking groups can gain access to sensitive government intelligence in the same way as teenage hacker groups like LAPSUS\$, then it is long past time for the U.S. federal government to perform a top-to-bottom review of authentication requirements tied to any government portals that traffic in sensitive or privileged information.

I’ll say it because it needs to be said: The United States government is in urgent need of leadership on cybersecurity at the executive branch level — preferably someone who has the authority and political will to eventually disconnect *any* federal government agency data portals that fail to enforce strong, multi-factor authentication.

I realize this may be far more complex than it sounds, particularly when it comes to authenticating law enforcement personnel who access these systems without the benefit of a PIV card or government-issued device (state and local authorities, for example). It’s not going to be as simple as just turning on multi-factor authentication for every user, thanks in part to a broad diversity of technologies being used across the law enforcement landscape.

But when hackers can plunder 16 law enforcement databases, arbitrarily send out law enforcement alerts for specific people or vehicles, or potentially disrupt ongoing law enforcement operations — all because someone stole, found or bought a username and password — it’s time for drastic measures.

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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/13 Musk takeover deal of Twitter in jeopardy
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/elon-musk-tweets-that-deal-for-twitter-is-on-hold">https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/elon-musk-tweets-that-deal-for-twitter-is-on-hold</a>
GIST	<a href="#">Twitter</a> shares were down 18% in <a href="#">premarket</a> trading after <a href="#">Elon Musk</a> said in a <a href="#">tweet</a> that a <a href="#">deal for the company</a> was temporarily on hold.  No other details were available.

	<p>Twitter's board accepted Musk's offer in late April to take the social media giant private at \$54.20 per share. Musk, the world's richest man and the chief executive of <a href="#">Tesla Inc.</a>, had said that one of his priorities would be to remove "<a href="#">spam bots</a>" from the platform.</p> <p>The company had earlier this month estimated that false or spam accounts represented fewer than 5% of its monetizable daily active users during the first quarter.</p> <p>It also said it faced several risks until the deal with Musk is closed, including whether advertisers would continue to spend on Twitter.</p> <p>Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Cryptocurrency not so crime friendly?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/cryptocurrency-may-not-crime-friendly-federal-law-enforcement-getting-rcna23844">https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/cryptocurrency-may-not-crime-friendly-federal-law-enforcement-getting-rcna23844</a>
GIST	<p>When the Justice Department announced in February that it had seized bitcoin worth \$3.6 billion, it was more than just the largest recovery of alleged crime proceeds in U.S. history. It was the biggest signal yet that cryptocurrency, once seen as attractive to criminals for its supposed shield of anonymity, may not be so crime-friendly after all.</p> <p>Just a few years ago, the federal government barely knew what to do with cryptocurrency. Now, most federal law enforcement agencies employ experts adept at tracing it. Investigators are using a new generation of sophisticated software that harnesses big data to link transactions to people, taking advantage of the fact that most cryptocurrency transactions are recorded in public ledgers that can never be erased.</p> <p>“If a bank was robbed five years ago and you’re still trying to chase down those leads, you have no idea potentially where that stolen cash could be at this point,” said Chris Janczewski, who spoke in an exclusive interview when he was the lead crypto investigator with the Internal Revenue Service. “With cryptocurrencies, like Bitcoin, every transaction is on a public ledger. It’s public and is there forever.”</p> <p>Janczewski made a career’s worth of cases on that proposition, including acting as the lead agent in that \$3.6 billion seizure. He helped shut down a child exploitation ring to a North Korean hacking scheme to a terrorist fundraising appeal — all involving cryptocurrency. He recently left for a job with TRM Labs, whose software helped trace the cryptocurrency at the heart of those and many other cases.</p> <p>“We at the IRS have always been focused on being financial investigators — following the money,” he said. “We’d have posters [that said] ‘The best financial investigators in the world.’ And I’d like to point out that there’s not an asterisk at the end of that. It’s not just for U.S. dollars or the euro — that is all types of financial activity, to include cryptocurrencies, like Bitcoin.”</p> <p>There are different types of cryptocurrency; the most commonly traded, including bitcoin, is digital money that is not backed by any government. It exists on a decentralized network of computers based on technology called blockchain and protected by unbreakable codes.</p> <p>Crypto has not caught on as a common method of payment, but many cryptocurrencies have demonstrated staying power as “stores of value” similar to gold and other precious metals. The value of bitcoin and other currencies, while fluctuating significantly, has risen dramatically over time, drawing the interest of investors.</p> <p>Initially, bitcoin and other crypto was seen as a useful tool for criminals trying to avoid scrutiny of their transactions, because while the transactions are recorded, the identities of those making them can be obscured. But more and more, law enforcement has been able to pierce the veil of anonymity.</p>

“What we’ve seen is that a lot of the reasons that made things like bitcoin attractive to criminals are also making it increasingly unattractive to criminals,” said lawyer Urszula McCormack, a Hong Kong-based partner at King & Wood Mallesons specializing in cross-border finance and technology.

“When you look at what is actually involved in a transaction, you’re looking at the use of what’s called a public key or a wallet, and that’s a string of letters and numbers,” she added, but “that isn’t purely anonymous.”

Janczewski and other IRS investigators use analytic software made by TRM, Chainalysis and other companies to scrape the web and the dark web for bits of information.

According to Chainalysis’ annual crime report, just 0.15 percent of crypto transactions last year involved criminal activity, down from 3.37 percent in 2019.

Still, that represents a large volume of criminal transactions, the company noted in a blog post. The amount of illicit activity, \$14 billion, “represents a significant problem,” [the post said](#). “Criminal abuse of cryptocurrency creates huge impediments for continued adoption, heightens the likelihood of restrictions being imposed by governments, and worst of all victimizes innocent people around the world.”

Jared Koopman, the head of the IRS’s Criminal Investigations Division, said his agency had become adept at tracing cryptocurrency.

“Most crimes involve money,” he said. “They involve some type of effort to scheme or defraud individuals or make a profit on illegal activity. So our job is to follow and trace those financial flows no matter what the underlying crime is and to hold those people accountable.”

In its latest challenge, the IRS has been tasked with helping the Justice Department investigate how some Russian oligarchs evade sanctions, some of them with cryptocurrency.

As the lead crypto investigator, Janczewski played a role in a series of extraordinary cases, including one involving a massive child pornography ring called “Welcome to Video.” The consumers paid in bitcoin and thought they were anonymous. In 2019, nearly 340 people in 23 states and 12 countries were arrested. And 23 children were rescued from their abusers, the Justice Department said.

“Following the money led to saving children and actually impacting real lives,” Janczewski said.

In 2020, Janczewski helped the Justice Department expose a massive scheme to steal \$250 million worth of cryptocurrency by the North Korea government, seizing an unspecified sum he said amounted to millions of dollars from the rogue regime.

The case involved working with military hackers from U.S. Cyber Command, who initially wondered why the IRS was knocking on their door, Koopman said.

“Often, when we often walk into the room with a lot of other agencies, the question is why is the IRS here? And I think that’s both a common question but also one that we’re trying to work to stop from occurring, because we feel like we offer a unique skill set that many other law enforcement agencies and intelligence community partners don’t necessarily have.”

Also in 2020, Janczewski and the IRS took down three online terrorist financing campaigns, involving Hamas’ military wing, Al Qaeda and the Islamic State terrorist group, in what the IRS called the government’s largest seizure of cryptocurrency in the terrorism context.

The Justice Department seized millions of dollars from more than 300 cryptocurrency accounts. For a time, the IRS set up a fake fundraising website that routed terrorism contributions to U.S. government coffers.



	“That was pretty enjoyable to think that money that people thought were going to go to a terrorist entity was instead going to the victims-of-terrorism fund — like the complete opposite of what they actually intended to do,” Janczewski said.
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Emergency economic powers act extended</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/biden-extends-telecom-executive-order-huawei-zte-china/">https://therecord.media/biden-extends-telecom-executive-order-huawei-zte-china/</a>
GIST	<p>President Joe Biden on Thursday extended for another year a Trump-era executive order that declared a national emergency and prohibited U.S. companies from using telecommunications equipment produced by firms posing a national security risk.</p> <p>The 2019 order invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which grants the president the authority to regulate commerce in response to a national emergency that threatens the U.S.</p> <p>In this instance, the order targeted Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE — part of an overarching effort to secure the country’s technology from companies potentially under the sway of adversarial governments.</p> <p>The “unrestricted acquisition or use in the United States of information and communications technology or services designed, developed, manufactured, or supplied by persons owned by, controlled by, or subject to the jurisdiction or direction of foreign adversaries augments the ability of these foreign adversaries to create and exploit vulnerabilities in information and communications technology or services, with potentially catastrophic effects,” <a href="#">Biden said in a statement</a>.</p> <p>“This threat continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States,” the president added.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Italy confronts Russia-linked cyberattacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/italy-killnet-hacking-military-parliament-national-health-institute/">https://therecord.media/italy-killnet-hacking-military-parliament-national-health-institute/</a>
GIST	<p>The websites of Italy’s parliament, military and National Health Institute faced disruptions on Thursday by a pro-Russian hacking group previously implicated in a similar cyberattack on the Romanian government.</p> <p>The attack also affected the Automobile Club d’Italia and several other Italian institutions. On Telegram, the Killnet hacking group took credit for the incidents. Several of the sites are back up and running after being down for several hours.</p> <p>Italy’s National Cybersecurity Agency did not respond to requests for comment, but the president of Italy’s Senate, Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, said there was no lasting harm to the parliament’s websites.</p> <p>“No damage from the attack which involved the external network of the Senate. Thanks to the technicians for the immediate intervention. These are serious episodes, which should not be underestimated. We will continue to keep our guard up,” she wrote on Twitter.</p> <p><a href="#">Two weeks ago</a>, Romania’s national cybersecurity response team and intelligence agency said the websites for the ministry of defense, border police, national railway company were attacked by Killnet with distributed denial-of-service attacks.</p> <p>At the time, Killnet said it launched the attack because Romania supported Ukraine after Russia invaded earlier this year.</p> <p>The Romanian agencies added that Killnet specializes in DDoS attacks and has previously attacked sites connected to the governments of the U.S., Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic and other NATO members. <a href="#">On Telegram</a>, members of Killnet said the attack on Italy was not as severe as their attack on Romania.</p>



	<p>They made several charged taunts toward the governments of Italy and Spain.</p> <p>“Our Legion conducts military cyber exercises in your countries in order to improve their skills. Everything happens similarly to your actions – the Italians and the Spaniards are going to learn how to kill people in Ukraine,” an alleged member of the group said.</p> <p>“Our Legion is learning to kill your servers! You must understand that this is training. Don’t make too much noise, I’m sick of the amount of news about attacks on the Senate. I give you my word of honor that our cyber army will soon finish training in your territory, and we will go on the offensive. It will happen suddenly and very quickly.”</p> <p>Italy has provided military and financial support to Ukraine.</p> <p>Microsoft vice president Tom Burt <a href="#">said</a> last month that the company’s experts believe cyberattacks will continue to escalate and widen as the war between Russia and Ukraine continues.</p> <p>“Russian nation-state threat actors may be tasked to expand their destructive actions outside of Ukraine to retaliate against those countries that decide to provide more military assistance to Ukraine and take more punitive measures against the Russian government in response to the continued aggression,” Burt said.</p> <p>“We’ve observed Russian-aligned actors active in Ukraine show interest in or conduct operations against organizations in the Baltics and Turkey – all NATO member states actively providing political, humanitarian or military support to Ukraine.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/12 'Eternity Project' new malware-as-a-service
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/eternity-malware-kit-offers-stealer-miner-worm-ransomware-tools/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/eternity-malware-kit-offers-stealer-miner-worm-ransomware-tools/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Threat actors have launched the 'Eternity Project,' a new malware-as-a-service where threat actors can purchase a malware toolkit that can be customized with different modules depending on the attack being conducted.</p> <p>The malware toolkit is modular and can include an info-stealer, a coin miner, a clipper, a ransomware program, a worm spreader, and soon, also a DDoS (distributed denial of service) bot, each being purchase separately.</p> <p>All of the above are promoted on a dedicated Telegram channel that counts over 500 members, where the authors post release notes for updates, usage instructions, and discuss feature suggestions.</p> <p>Those who have bought the malware kit can utilize the Telegram Bot to build the binary automatically after selecting which features they want to activate and paying for them with crypto.</p> <p><b>Tools in detail</b></p> <p>Starting with the info-stealer, which is sold for \$260/year, this tool snatches passwords, credit cards, bookmarks, tokens, cookies, and autofill data stored in over twenty web browsers.</p> <p>Additionally, it can steal information from cryptocurrency extensions or even cold wallets, and it also targets ten password managers, VPN clients, messengers, and gaming clients.</p> <p>The miner module costs \$90/year and features task manager hiding, auto-restart when killed, and startup launch persistence.</p> <p>The clipper is sold for \$110 and is a utility that monitors the clipboard for cryptocurrency wallet addresses to replace them with wallets under the operator's control.</p>

The developer sells the Eternity Worm for a whopping \$390, giving the malware the capability to spread on its own via USB drivers, local network shares, local files, cloud drives, Python projects (through the interpreter), Discord accounts, and Telegram accounts.

Finally, Eternity ransomware, the most expensive module, is \$490. It supports offline encryption using a combination of AES and RSA and targets documents, photos, and databases.

The authors claim it's FUD (fully undetectable), a claim that is supposedly backed by Virus Total results where the strain returns zero detections.

Interestingly, the ransomware module offers an option to set a timer that renders the files completely unrecoverable when it expires. This puts additional pressure on the victim to pay the ransom quickly.

### **Real or scam?**

[Analysts at Cyble](#) who discovered the Eternity Project told Bleeping Computer that while they didn't have the chance to examine all of the modules yet, they have seen samples of the malware circulating and used in the wild, and all user comments on Telegram point to this being a real threat.

By looking into the stealer module, Cyble analysts found several similarities to the Jester Stealer, both probably derived from a GitHub project named [DynamicStealer](#).

As such, the "Eternity Stealer" is most likely a copy of that code, followed by modifications and rebranding to sell it on Telegram for profit.

Even if this is "skidware", the additional modules, customer support, automated building, and detailed instructions on how to use the malware, make it a potent weapon in the hands of unskilled hackers and a severe threat to internet users.

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HEADLINE	05/13 Vanished: \$1trillion worth of crypto in 6mo.
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-more-than-1-trillion-of-crypto-vanished-in-just-six-months-11652434202?mod=hp_lead_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-more-than-1-trillion-of-crypto-vanished-in-just-six-months-11652434202?mod=hp_lead_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>Traders' flight from risky investments has halved the price of bitcoin and <a href="#">other cryptocurrencies</a>, wiping out more than \$1 trillion worth of digital money since November.</p> <p>Wild swings are fairly common with cryptocurrencies, but even seasoned investors were left reeling as bitcoin dropped 29% over a seven-day losing streak that just ended as a stablecoin—one part of the crypto world that <a href="#">touted its stability</a>—unexpectedly crashed.</p> <p>Investors are staring at an inflection point in the financial markets as interest rates rise and inflation rages, and they are responding by selling risky assets.</p> <p>For crypto, it has been a volatile journey into the depths.</p> <p>Last year cryptocurrencies were on fire and appeared to gain more legitimacy after years of being considered a fringe, speculative product. <a href="#">Tesla Inc.</a> <a href="#">TSLA -0.82%</a> said it bought <a href="#">\$1.5 billion in bitcoin</a>, pushing prices higher. <a href="#">Coinbase Global Inc.</a> <a href="#">COIN 8.90%</a> listed its shares in the first major <a href="#">bitcoin-focused public offering</a>.</p> <p>In November, bitcoin and ethereum, two of the most popular cryptocurrencies, reached all-time highs. Bitcoin's value at 5 p.m. on Nov. 9 was \$67,802.30; ethereum was worth \$4,800. They are now down 58% and 60%, respectively, from those levels.</p>

Cryptocurrencies were falling even before last week, victims of sky-high inflation. Bitcoin and [other digital currencies](#) have been talked about as inflation hedges. But the ripple effect has played out differently. Surging inflation is spurring the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates faster, which investors believe will cause a slowdown in economic growth. The result: Investors are unloading risky assets, including cryptocurrencies.

Also exacerbating the losses is that crypto trading, originally an individual-investor game, is now dominated by institutional investors such as hedge funds. Those who have sought diversification in crypto have been caught wrong-footed.

As the price has moved lower, both individual and institutional investors alike have been bowing out. When Coinbase [reported its first-quarter results](#) late Tuesday, it revealed it is hemorrhaging users. By the end of trading Thursday, Coinbase's stock was 82% below where it closed after its first day of trading just over a year ago.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Court allows Texas new social media law</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/12/federal-court-allows-texas-enforce-new-social-medi/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/12/federal-court-allows-texas-enforce-new-social-medi/</a>
GIST	<p>A federal appeals court is allowing Texas' new social media law to take effect, undoing a judge's blockade and escalating the legal fight over digital censorship.</p> <p>A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit issued a one-sentence ruling in favor of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who had appealed to prevent a federal judge's injunction from stopping the law.</p> <p>The Texas law aims to kill digital censorship by directing social media platforms with more than 50 million active users — such as Facebook and Twitter — to not discriminate against the viewpoint of</p> <p>“My office just secured another BIG WIN against BIG TECH,” Mr. Paxton said on Twitter from his office's account. “#Texas's HB20 is back in effect. The 5th Circuit made the right call here, and I look forward to continuing to defend the constitutionality of #HB20.”</p> <p>The three-judge panel was not unanimous, but the court did not reveal how the judges voted nor their reasoning for the decision.</p> <p>The litigants challenging Texas' law, Computer &amp; Communications Industry Association and NetChoice, were not pleased with the outcome.</p> <p>“This unexplained order contravenes established First Amendment law. No option is off the table,” said CCIA President Matt Schruers in a statement. “We will do what is necessary to ensure that the free market, not government fiat, decides what speech digital services do and do not disseminate.”</p> <p>Carl Szabo, vice president and general counsel of NetChoice, called Texas' law “constitutionally rotten through and through” and said in a statement that his group planned to appeal the order immediately.</p> <p>The tech industry trade groups had the upper hand before Wednesday's ruling.</p> <p>After Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed the law last fall, the two tech industry trade groups challenged it in September. CCIA and NetChoice scored an early victory in December 2021 when U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman granted a preliminary injunction blocking the law from being enforced.</p> <p>Texas appealed the federal judge's blockade and the federal appeals court heard oral arguments over the block earlier this week. The three-judge panel's decision on Wednesday siding with Texas about the blockade of the law did not expressly address the constitutionality of the social media law itself.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/12 FBI sought hacking tool for investigations
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/us/politics/fbi-pegasus-spyware-israel.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/us/politics/fbi-pegasus-spyware-israel.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The F.B.I. informed the Israeli government in a 2018 letter that it had purchased Pegasus, the notorious hacking tool, to collect data from mobile phones to aid ongoing investigations, the clearest documentary evidence to date that the bureau weighed using the spyware as a tool of law enforcement.</p> <p>The F.B.I.’s description of its intended use of Pegasus came in a letter from a top F.B.I. official to Israel’s Ministry of Defense that was reviewed by The New York Times. Pegasus is produced by an Israeli firm, NSO Group, which needs to gain approval from the Israeli government before it can sell the hacking tool to a foreign government.</p> <p>The 2018 letter, written by an official in the F.B.I.’s operational technology division, stated that the bureau intended to use Pegasus “for the collection of data from mobile devices for the prevention and investigation of crimes and terrorism, in compliance with privacy and national security laws.”</p> <p>The Times <a href="#">revealed in January</a> that the F.B.I. had purchased Pegasus in 2018 and, over the next two years, tested the spyware at a secret facility in New Jersey.</p> <p>Since the article’s publication, F.B.I. officials have acknowledged that they considered deploying Pegasus but have emphasized that the bureau bought the spying tool mainly to test and evaluate it — partly to assess how adversaries might use it. They said the bureau never used the spyware in any operation.</p> <p>During a congressional hearing in March, the F.B.I. director, Christopher A. Wray, said the bureau had bought a “limited license” for testing and evaluation “as part of our routine responsibilities to evaluate technologies that are out there, not just from a perspective of could they be used someday legally, but also, more important, what are the security concerns raised by those products.”</p> <p>“So, very different from using it to investigate anyone,” he said.</p> <p>The Times revealed that the F.B.I. had also received a demonstration by NSO of a different hacking tool, Phantom, that can do what Pegasus cannot — target and infiltrate U.S. cellphone numbers. After the demonstration, government lawyers spent years debating whether to purchase and deploy Phantom. It was not until last summer that the F.B.I. and the Justice Department decided not to deploy NSO hacking tools in operations.</p> <p>The F.B.I. has paid approximately \$5 million to NSO since the bureau first purchased Pegasus.</p> <p>The Times has sued the F.B.I. under the Freedom of Information Act for bureau documents related to the purchase, testing and possible deployment of NSO spyware tools. During a court hearing last month, a federal judge set a deadline of Aug. 31 for the F.B.I. to produce all relevant documents or be held in contempt. Government lawyers said the bureau thus far had identified more than 400 pages of documents that were responsive to the request.</p> <p>The F.B.I. letter to NSO, dated Dec. 4, 2018, stated that “the United States government will not sell, deliver or otherwise transfer to any other party under any condition without prior approval of the government of Israel.”</p> <p>Cathy L. Milhoan, an F.B.I. spokeswoman, said the bureau “works diligently to stay abreast of emerging technologies and tradecraft.”</p> <p>“The F.B.I. purchased a license to explore potential future legal use of the NSO product and potential security concerns the product poses,” she continued. “As part of this process, the F.B.I. met requirements of the Israeli Export Control Agency. After testing and evaluation, the F.B.I. chose not to use the product operationally in any investigation.”</p>

The Times article in January revealed that the C.I.A. in 2018 arranged and paid for the government of Djibouti to acquire Pegasus to assist its government in counterterrorism operations, despite longstanding concerns about human rights abuses there.

Pegasus is a so-called zero-click hacking tool — it can remotely extract everything from a target's mobile phone, including photos, contacts, messages and video recordings, without the user having to click on a phishing link to give Pegasus remote access. It can also turn phones into tracking and secret recording devices, allowing the phone to spy on its owner.

NSO has sold Pegasus to dozens of countries, which have used the spyware as part of investigations into terrorist networks, pedophile rings and drug kingpins. But it has also been abused by authoritarian and democratic governments alike to spy on journalists, human rights activists and political dissidents.

On Tuesday, the chief of Spain's intelligence agency was ousted after recent revelations that Spanish officials both deployed and were victims of Pegasus spyware.

The firing of the official, Paz Esteban, came days after the Spanish government said that the cellphones of senior Spanish officials, including Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Defense Minister Margarita Robles, had been penetrated last year by Pegasus. It was also revealed recently that the Spanish government had used Pegasus to penetrate the cellphones of Catalan separatist politicians.

Israel has used the tool as a bargaining chip in diplomatic negotiations, most notably in the secret talks that led to the so-called Abraham Accords that normalized relations between Israel and several of its historic Arab adversaries.

In November, the Biden administration put NSO and another Israeli firm on a "blacklist" of firms that are prohibited from doing business with American companies. The Commerce Department said the companies' spyware tools had "enabled foreign governments to conduct transnational repression, which is the practice of authoritarian governments targeting dissidents, journalists and activists outside of their sovereign borders to silence dissent."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Crash of TerraUSD shakes crypto</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/crash-of-terrausd-shakes-crypto-there-was-a-run-on-the-bank-11652371839?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/crash-of-terrausd-shakes-crypto-there-was-a-run-on-the-bank-11652371839?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>The cryptocurrency TerraUSD had one job: Maintain its value at \$1 per coin.</p> <p>Since it launched in 2020, it had mostly done that, rarely straying more than a fraction of a penny from its intended price. That made it an island of stability, a place where traders and investors could stash their funds in between forays into the otherwise frenzied crypto market.</p> <p>This week TerraUSD <a href="#">became part of the frenzy too</a>, slumping by more than a third on Monday and then tumbling as low as 23 cents on Wednesday.</p> <p>The collapse saddled investors with billions of dollars in losses. It ricocheted back into other cryptocurrencies, helping drive down the price of bitcoin. Another stablecoin, tether, edged down to as low as 96 cents on Thursday before regaining its peg to the dollar. The stock price of the largest U.S. crypto exchange, <a href="#">Coinbase Global</a>, has fallen more than 75% this year. It said on Tuesday <a href="#">that it was losing users and trading volume</a>.</p> <p>The crypto market has matured in recent years, running as a parallel financial system with its own version of banks and lending. These features attracted greater Wall Street engagement and venture investment, filling the coffers of crypto startups with cash. Crypto companies spent some of that cash on ad campaigns and lobbyists that painted the picture of an evolved market.</p>

Yet TerraUSD's plunge raises urgent questions about crypto developers' ambitions to build a new form of finance. It shows that despite the hype, the nascent crypto system is still prone to the kinds of destabilizing bank runs that happen in the nondigital world.

TerraUSD's outspoken creator, Do Kwon, directed that huge sums of money be spent to try to rescue his project. On [Twitter](#), he tried to rally his followers.

"Terra's return to form will be a sight to behold," he wrote shortly after 6 a.m. Eastern time on Wednesday, when his stablecoin was trading at half its intended value. "We're here to stay. And we're gonna keep making noise."

Stablecoins are a pillar of crypto's parallel financial system. Crypto enthusiasts need to maintain a link to the government-backed currencies of traditional finance, where rent is due, cars are bought and bills are paid. But they want to trade and invest in cryptoland only, not in dollars or euros or pounds. So stablecoins act as a kind of reserve currency, an asset whose value everyone understands—and that shouldn't change.

Professional traders and individual investors alike use stablecoins, and had stashed around \$180 billion in them as of Tuesday. A trader might sell a bitcoin for TerraUSD, then use the TerraUSD to buy ether, another cryptocurrency, without ever touching a dollar or a bank account.

Crypto companies have sought to convince Congress that stablecoins are safe places for investors to put money. The TerraUSD collapse has shaken that assumption—and with it the idea that there could be any safe place in crypto.

Stablecoins attempt to resolve a conundrum: How can you make something stable in a volatile financial system?

Some stablecoins attempt to do this by holding safe assets such as Treasury bills in a kind of reserve account: For every stablecoin that is created, \$1 in Treasury bills is put in the account. Redeem a stablecoin and \$1 of Treasury bills comes out of the account.

TerraUSD has a more complex approach. It's an algorithmic stablecoin that relies on financial engineering to maintain its link to the dollar.

Previous attempts at algorithmic stablecoins ended in failure when the peg collapsed. Mr. Kwon and his colleagues believed they had created a better version, less prone to runs.

Many crypto traders believed him, and TerraUSD's popularity surged. Mr. Kwon suggested that the coin would become the dominant stablecoin and could ultimately supplant the dollar itself.

Despite having swelled to a size of more than \$18 billion, TerraUSD crumbled in a matter of days.

"I understand the last 72 hours have been extremely tough on all of you," Mr. Kwon tweeted on Wednesday, addressing his followers, who are known as "Lunatics" because of TerraUSD's sister cryptocurrency, Luna. "I am resolved to work with every one of you to weather this crisis, and we will build our way out of this."

Jim Greco, a partner at crypto quantitative investment firm F9 Research, was celebrating his birthday at Manhattan's Le Bernardin on Saturday night when he got a message notifying him that TerraUSD had dropped below 99.5 cents.

He told his team to sell the coin, which had been part of F9's broader stablecoin holdings. Later his firm made a profitable bet that the coin would keep falling, said Mr. Greco.



“We all knew it was going to fail eventually,” Mr. Greco said. “We just didn’t know what the catalyst would be.”

Traders said the catalyst for the drop, which began over the weekend and snowballed Monday, was a series of large withdrawals from Anchor Protocol, a kind of crypto bank created by developers at Mr. Kwon’s firm, Terraform Labs. Such platforms allow digital-currency investors to earn interest on their coins by lending them out.

Over the past year, Anchor had fueled interest in TerraUSD by offering lofty returns of nearly 20% on deposits of TerraUSD. That was far higher than the rates available in traditional dollar bank accounts, and more than what crypto investors could get from lending out other, more conventional stablecoins.

Anchor, like other crypto lending protocols, would lend the TerraUSD to borrowers that used the coins for various trading strategies or for earning built-in rewards that blockchain networks provide for processing transactions.

Critics, including crypto investors who have attacked Mr. Kwon on social media, questioned whether such yields were sustainable. Still, by late last week investors had deposited more than \$14 billion of TerraUSD in Anchor, according to the platform’s website. The bulk of the stablecoin’s supply was parked in the Anchor platform.

Big transactions over the weekend knocked TerraUSD from its \$1 value. The instability prompted investors to pull their TerraUSD from Anchor and sell the coin.

That, in turn, led more investors to withdraw from Anchor, creating a cascading effect of more withdrawals and more selling. TerraUSD deposits at Anchor fell to about \$2 billion by Thursday, down 86% from their peak, the protocol’s website shows.

“There was a run on the bank,” said Michael Boroughs, managing partner of Fortis Digital Value LLC, a crypto hedge-fund firm.

Some crypto market observers claim TerraUSD was deliberately targeted. “This was a short attack,” said Ronald AngSiy, vice president at Intellabridge Technology Corp., a company that allows people earn interest on cash deposits by investing them in crypto.

This is how the stablecoin is supposed to work: If TerraUSD’s price dips below \$1, traders can “burn” the coin—or permanently remove it from circulation—in exchange for \$1 worth of new units of Luna. That should reduce the supply of TerraUSD and raise its price.

Conversely, if TerraUSD climbs above \$1, traders can burn Luna and create new TerraUSD. That should increase supply of the stablecoin and lower its price back toward \$1.

In theory, that means traders can make money when TerraUSD falls below \$1 because they can buy the stablecoin at its depressed price and convert it into \$1 of Luna. The idea is that the collective efforts of traders around the world keep TerraUSD in line with its dollar peg, while Luna acts as a shock absorber, buffering TerraUSD from volatility.

The system works only if traders actually want Luna. Investors did not want Luna when TerraUSD lost its peg this week. They sold Luna in a panic.

Luna lost nearly \$20 billion in value as it surrendered nearly all its value in just a few days, according to data tracker CoinMarketCap. It had previously enjoyed a wild run-up over the past year as speculators bet on the continued adoption of TerraUSD.

“Once people lose confidence—and we’ve seen this before in money-market funds and commercial paper—they will run for the exits,” said Joe Abate, a research analyst at Barclays.



In a rush to get out, sellers of TerraUSD swamped buyers on big crypto exchanges, resulting in quotes for prices below \$1 that spooked investors.

A spokesman for Terraform Labs said in an emailed statement that there were shortcomings in the infrastructure behind TerraUSD. “We’re currently working on a comprehensive strategy to rectify many of the existing points of vulnerability, which will be published publicly soon,” he said.

There was supposed to be a last line of defense. Mr. Kwon had sought to shield the stablecoin by amassing a huge war chest that could be used to defend its \$1 peg, much as a central bank in an emerging-markets country might spend dollar reserves to protect its currency.

He co-founded a nonprofit called Luna Foundation Guard and announced earlier this year that it would buy up to \$10 billion in bitcoin. Terraform Labs donated several billion dollars worth of Luna to seed the reserve fund.

By Tuesday, the fund had largely depleted its \$3 billion in bitcoin and other cryptocurrency resources amid an emergency effort to salvage TerraUSD, according to the fund’s online data dashboard. The fund’s selling contributed to a sharp drop in bitcoin’s price, analysts and traders said.

Social-media forums devoted to Luna and TerraUSD have been filled with posts by investors upset about losses and debating whether Mr. Kwon can spearhead a turnaround.

He has pledged to fix TerraUSD, which is known by the ticker UST. In his series of tweets on Wednesday, he outlined technical steps that would help reduce the oversupply of the stablecoin, helping to bring it back up to \$1.

The market’s confidence in TerraUSD will be shaken even if Mr. Kwon’s team succeeds in restoring the peg, said Mr. Boroughs of Fortis Digital Value. “It’s going to take a long time to bring back that trust.”

The TerraUSD crisis is a blow to the reputation of Mr. Kwon, a Stanford University graduate who worked at Apple Inc. and Microsoft Corp. before delving into crypto. He is an outspoken presence on social media, often assailing his critics in the crypto community.

“He will call anyone who questions him an idiot,” said Eric Wall, chief investment officer of Scandinavian crypto hedge fund Arcane Assets, who has clashed with Mr. Kwon online about Luna and TerraUSD.

A new father, Mr. Kwon named his infant daughter Luna, writing in a tweet after her birth last month: “My dearest creation named after my greatest invention.”

TerraUSD’s troubles could cast a shadow of doubt over stablecoins or shift customers to its competitors. One, USD Coin, has kept its link to the dollar during TerraUSD’s turbulence.

USD Coin and tether, the one that edged down to 96 cents before regaining its peg, are backed by financial assets. The companies say they have investments equivalent to the value of every stablecoin.

These stablecoins have their skeptics too, particularly tether, which has long been dogged by allegations that it isn’t fully backed. Some short-sellers have bet on a drop in tether. Traders have stepped up their bets against tether during the drama over TerraUSD, said Matt Ballensweig, co-head of trading and lending at crypto firm Genesis.

A spokesman for Tether Holdings Ltd., the company behind the stablecoin, said: “Tether is the most liquid stablecoin in the market and is 100% backed by a strong, conservative, and liquid reserve portfolio. Tether has withstood multiple ‘black swan’ events in cryptocurrency.” The spokesman added that the company has continued to process redemptions for its stablecoin during the market stress.

	<p>Current law doesn't provide comprehensive standards for stablecoin issuers. The Biden administration has pressed Congress to pass legislation that would regulate the issuers of such assets similarly to banks.</p> <p>Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told Senate lawmakers on Tuesday that TerraUSD's plunge has reinforced the administration's concerns that stablecoins, including traditional asset-backed and algorithmic varieties, can be subject to investor stampedes, and that a regulatory framework is needed.</p> <p>Many of the investors who rushed into trades involving TerraUSD and Luna likely didn't know what they were getting into, said Martin Hiesboeck, head of blockchain and crypto research at digital money platform Uphold.</p> <p>"You can have a bunch of developers writing an algorithm and they themselves might be 100% clear on how it works," Mr. Hiesboeck said. "But your average crypto-crazy Joe does not read the...code. They don't read the fine print."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Costa Rica declares national emergency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/costa-rica-national-emergency-ransomware-attacks">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/costa-rica-national-emergency-ransomware-attacks</a>
GIST	<p>After a month of crippling ransomware attacks, <a href="#">Costa Rica</a> has declared a state of emergency invoking a measure usually reserved to deal with natural disasters or the Covid-19 pandemic to allow the government to react more nimbly to the crisis.</p> <p>President <a href="#">Rodrigo Chaves</a>, who was sworn in on Sunday, made the emergency declaration one of his first acts. It was published on Wednesday, but Chaves has not named the members of the National Emergency Commission.</p> <p>The declaration refers to the attack <a href="#">Costa Rica</a> is suffering at the hands of "cybercriminals" and "cyberterrorists".</p> <p>The Russian-speaking Conti gang had claimed responsibility for the attack. Last week the US state department offered a \$10m reward for information leading to the identification or location of Conti leaders.</p> <p>The attack began in April when the finance ministry was the first to report that a number of its systems were affected, including tax collection and customs. Attacks also targeted the social security agency's human resources system and labor ministry.</p> <p>The Costa Rican government has not reported an expansion of the attack, but some systems, especially at the finance ministry, are still not functioning normally. The government has also not made an estimate of the losses caused by the attack.</p> <p>Carlos Alvarado was still president when the attacks began and he said Costa Rica would not pay the gang any ransom.</p> <p>In its statement last week, the US state department said the Conti group had been responsible for hundreds of ransomware incidents during the past two years. "The FBI estimates that as of January 2022, there had been over 1,000 victims of attacks associated with Conti ransomware with victim payouts exceeding \$150,000,000, making the Conti Ransomware variant the costliest strain of ransomware ever documented," the statement said.</p> <p>In addition to the ransomware state of emergency, Chaves also eliminated pandemic-related obligatory use of masks in public spaces and issued a decree that urged public institutions to not sanction officials who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19, reversing his predecessor's policy.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/12 Malware clues before a ransomware attack
SOURCE	<a href="https://intel471.com/blog/malware-before-ransomware-trojan-information-stealer-cobalt-strike">https://intel471.com/blog/malware-before-ransomware-trojan-information-stealer-cobalt-strike</a>
GIST	<p>Organizations are never going to stop ransomware attacks by looking for the ransomware.</p> <p>When it comes to ransomware attacks, threat actors often spend time on an organization's networks for weeks (if not months) before the actual ransomware is launched. While these actors go to great lengths to mask their tracks, there are clues that can unearth the possibility of a ransomware attack before the actual ransomware shows up on an organization's system. In order to do this, however, organizations need to know what to look for before it's too late.</p> <p>The following is a breakdown of what malware organizations should be on the lookout for in order to thwart a ransomware attack. While the presence of these particular kinds of malware does not automatically mean a ransomware attack is imminent, awareness of their utility will help security teams proactively protect their systems from the crippling, expensive impact of a ransomware incident.</p> <p><b>Trojans</b></p> <p>One of the most common malware families on the internet, trojans are often used by malicious actors as an initial way to gain access to an organization's network. Often delivered in some form of a phishing attack, trojans present attackers with the ability to siphon data from networks, leave a gateway for further malware delivery, or both.</p> <p>Over the past decade, trojans were primarily used to siphon banking credentials, as attackers focused on obtaining access to financial accounts. With the rise in ransomware, threat actors have fine-tuned trojans to uncover credentials that can give them unfettered access to an organization's network.</p> <p>A prime example of how trojans are used to set up ransomware attacks can be seen in the connection between Emotet and Conti. Intel 471 researchers recently discovered that Conti uses Emotet to gain a foothold in organizations' networks, then allows ransomware operators to pick targets from a pool of infected organizations. Conti has made Emotet a key part of their attack chain, specifically since Emotet was re-launched in November 2021.</p> <p>Other trojans that have been used in recent ransomware attacks include QbotIcedID (aka BokBot), and ZLoader. Intel 471 researchers have noticed that the Conti group appears to have dropped BazarLoader in favor of a new malware called Bumblebee, which follows <a href="#">research from Google</a> stating that Bumblebee has been used by an access broker with ties to Conti. Intel 471 researchers have observed Cobalt Strike, Metasploit, Sliver (an open-source backdoor programmed in Go), and IcedID as Bumblebee payloads.</p> <p><b>Information Stealers</b></p> <p>While information stealers are close in functionality to trojans, there can be slight differences between the two kinds of malware. Trojans will often steal information that is being entered into a machine (i.e. a keylogger), while information stealers are programmed to steal credentials and other information that is already stored on a machine.</p> <p>Info stealers can collect all sorts of information, including browser cookies, autofill data, cryptocurrency wallets, File Transfer Protocol (FTP) clients and desktop applications. Threat actors use this information to search for high-level credentials that can allow them to move freely within an organization's network, find further high-value data they want to steal, and locations where they need to deploy ransomware in order to lock an organization's system.</p> <p>Some ransomware crews have re-formulated info stealers that were used for a variety of crimes in the past, while others have created new ones specifically for their own use. Malware known as "StealBit" is used as an info stealer to support affiliates of LockBit ransomware. Rather than a conventional stealer designed for harvesting data from browsers, StealBit operates as a file grabber, allegedly cloning folders from corporate networks to the LockBit victim shaming blog in almost no time.</p>

Other information stealers that have been used in ransomware attacks are KPOT, Mars, Raccoon, Redline and Vidar.

### Penetration testing tools

There is a bevy of tools used by legitimate security professionals that have been co-opted into the attack chain of ransomware operators. While these tools are purchased and licensed by their developers, this software is often copied, [cracked](#), or reversed engineered to serve ransomware gangs' nefarious purposes. These gangs often use these programs to further move throughout a network, and siphon administrative credentials that pave the way for ransomware attacks.

Cobalt Strike is one of these popular tools that has been embraced by ransomware gangs. These gangs and their affiliates use Cobalt Strike as a second-stage payload for many malware campaigns across many malware families. Intel 471 researchers have observed Cobalt Strike being delivered via Hanictor, SystemBC and Trickbot to further facilitate credential harvesting, lateral movement, and ransomware deployment. Additionally, the Conti ransomware group tried to buy a legitimate license for Cobalt Strike through a shell company made to look like a legitimate security enterprise.

Mimikatz, initially created by a security researcher to learn how Microsoft's authentication protocols were vulnerable to attacks, is a very popular tool amongst cybercriminals. Intel 471 researchers have observed several ransomware-as-a-service operations, including ALPHV, AvosLocker, and SunCrypt, use Mimikatz to harvest credentials from privileged network administrators.

Metasploit is similar to Mimikatz in that it's open source, but provides a wide array of add-ons that allow users to perform an extensive amount of tasks. Modules can be placed into Metasploit that allow for similar tasks like those in the malware listed above including keylogging, information stealing and the ability to drop further malware. Intel 471 researchers observed Conti and LockBit 2.0 recruiting developers that had experience deploying or working with Metasploit.

### Not a panacea

To be clear: setting up a security strategy that only looks for these types of malware is not sustainable. Vulnerabilities still need to be patched, phishing emails will still be sent, and employees could still be targets of social engineering scams. However, being proactive about this specific malware may force attackers to move on from your organization and find a different target. Ignoring malware prior to a ransomware attack is a recipe for disaster.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Ransomware changed the threat landscape</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://blog.checkpoint.com/2022/05/11/how-the-evolution-of-ransomware-changed-the-threat-landscape/">https://blog.checkpoint.com/2022/05/11/how-the-evolution-of-ransomware-changed-the-threat-landscape/</a>
GIST	<p>Five years ago, on May 12, 2017, the world fell victim to a major ransomware attack known as 'WannaCry'. The attack had an unprecedented scale, and spread around the world like wildfire, with more than 200,000 Windows computers across 150 countries affected outbreaking only a few days. The damage of the attack accounted to billions of dollars in losses.</p> <p>About a month before the WannaCry attack, a hacker group called the Shadow Brokers publicly leaked an exploit developed by the National Security Agency (NSA). This exploit, dubbed EternalBlue, was based on the vulnerability in Windows SMB and allowed code execution on the remote machine. Although the vulnerability patch was released by Microsoft prior to the Shadow Brokers leak, many of the computers worldwide remained unpatched and therefore vulnerable, enabling EternalBlue to become a key to the unfortunate success of WannaCry. Equipped with extraordinary lateral movement capabilities based on the leaked NSA code, simple ransomware malware was upgraded into one of the most influential global cyberattacks observed.</p> <p>Although not directly targeted, one of the most notable WannaCry victims was the UK's National Health Service (NHS), which was running a large number of vulnerable machines and therefore was hit especially hard, with a third of NHS hospital trusts affected by the attack. Among other major victims of the global pandemic were Spain's Telefonica telecom service as well as telecom providers, banks, the railway</p>

system, and even the Interior Ministry in Russia. Governments, hospitals, and other major companies all found themselves battling the attack. The outbreak was stopped when the researchers enabled the “kill switch” hardcoded in the malware – while this did not help already encrypted systems, it drastically slowed the spread of the infection.

On 18 December 2017, the U.S. Government formally announced that it publicly considered North Korea to be the main culprit behind the WannaCry attack, with Canada, New Zealand, Japan and the UK also standing behind those claims. Later in September 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) announced the first formal charges against the North Korean citizen Park Jin-Hyok. The DoJ contended that Park was a North Korean hacker working as part of a government-sponsored hacking team known as the “Lazarus Group”, had also been involved in the WannaCry attack, among other activities.

It is still widely discussed what was the primary goal of the WannaCry ransomware. The malware is obviously designed to extort money from the victims: they were forced to make a \$300 payment within a 7-day deadline. The payments were requested to be made in Bitcoin, at the time when cryptocurrencies were much appealing to North Korea as the U.S. pursued international sanctions aimed at further isolating the country over its nuclear weapons program. The global impact of the attack together with other Lazarus Group regime-backed activities, however, indicates that in addition to the monetary aspect the attackers were really after chaos, panic, and destruction.

WannaCry attack changed the cybersecurity game – not just through its outsized impact; it made waves because of its outsized influence on the cyber-threat landscape. As the first global-scaled, multi-vectored cyberattack powered by state-sponsored actors, it marked a turning point in the cybersecurity environment, inspiring actors worldwide and affecting the whole threat landscape for the next five years up until now.

#### Ransomware as a tool of nation-state actors

Being politically encouraged from the beginning, WannaCry outbreak ignited the idea to use ransomware for specific nation-state interests. In the summer of 2017, a month after the WannaCry attack, Ukraine suffered a catastrophic cyberattack by NotPetya ransomware that severely affected banks, public transportation, power companies and the government sector. The attack was carried out by Sandworm, a group of Russian military intelligence hackers, and was intended as a climactic strike against Ukraine in the years-long cyberwar Russia had carried out against its southwestern neighbor. However, from Ukraine the attack rapidly spread around the globe: likely inspired by WannaCry’s unfortunate success, NotPetya was also using EternalBlue to propagate between the computers, maximizing the outreach and hence the damage. This time, it was definitely not designed to make money, but to spread fast and cause damage, with a plausibly deniable cover of a ‘ransomware’, giving victims no way to retrieve their data and crippling operations for months. Several large public companies disclosed in securities filings that the attack cost them hundreds of millions of dollars in lost business and recovery efforts, including global shipping company Maersk, pharmaceutical company Merck and a number of hospitals in the U.S.

In 2020, Iranian nation-state-backed actors also started to add ransomware variants in their offensive operations. Ransomware operations proved themselves as powerful tools for disrupting or discrediting its victims. Between 2020 and 2021, at least six Iranian threat groups, including [MosesStaff](#), [Pay2Key](#), Black Shadow and [APT35](#), were identified deploying ransomware variants, targeting primarily the Iranian regime’s main enemies – Israel and the U.S.

In early 2022, with the beginning of the kinetic war between Russia and Ukraine, multiple advanced cyber-attacks were detected targeting Ukrainian targets. One of these campaigns leveraged the wiper malware dubbed “HermeticWiper” combined with the ransomware named “HermeticRansom”. This GoLang-based ransomware’s code and workflow are relatively simple and appear to have been constructed hastily, indicating it was used as a decoy to prevent victims from accessing their data, while at the same time improving the efficiency of other simultaneous cyber-attacks. HermeticRansom was deployed at the same time as HermeticWiper aimed at finance and government contractor targets from Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania.

With the success of all these operations – where public attention and mass destruction of networks is the definition of success – we can definitely say that WannaCry’s legacy is still alive, inspiring ransomware



usage by sanctioned countries like North Korea and Iran, with Russia joining them right now. Ransomware is still a plausible tool in achieving their political agenda, whether it's causing the real damage or actually extorting ransom demands in cryptocurrency, which is a well-established tool to evade sanctions.

From drive-by and email spam to domain-wide ransomware

In the WannaCry era of 2017, ransomware was commonly distributed on a large scale via massive email spam campaigns and drive-by downloads that were facilitated by Exploit Kits: everyone and anyone could be a target. Drive-by attacks allowed ransomware actors to infect victims who unknowingly visited a compromised website, without any additional action, heavily relying on unpatched browsers and plugins like Internet Explorer and Adobe Flash for successful exploitation. Email spam campaigns distributing ransomware relied on social engineering techniques to make the victim run the ransomware, and usually were carried by spam botnets. One of the most successful examples of leveraging both methods of "spray and pray" delivery was the GandCrab ransomware, whose operators and affiliates collected a total an estimated of \$2 billion in ransom payments, as part of their multiple campaigns.

With the development of anti-virus protection and the fall of exploit kits, spam distribution of ransomware became obsolete, and cybercriminals learned that one successful corporate victim can yield the same revenue as hundreds of non-corporate victims, with less effort. In 2018, ransomware distribution shifted from a numbers game to a more targeted approach of "big game hunting", where advanced threat actors find – or even buy – their way into enterprise organizations. As the result, the cybercriminals behind the top malware families that started as banking trojans – like Emotet, Trickbot, Dridex, Qbot, and others, changed the focus of their botnet operations to hunting appropriate targets for ransomware attacks.

Once initial infection in corporate environments is achieved, threat actors conduct an extensive reconnaissance effort aimed at locating the most lucrative targets. Threat actors spend days, sometimes weeks, exploring the compromised networks to locate high-value assets and remove all possible backups, thus maximizing their damage. The scrutiny and the complexity of such target-tailored operations against enterprises turned ransomware operations over time into an [enterprise-like business](#) themselves. Prolific ransomware groups nowadays conduct not only a complicated technical operation, including the development of custom tools and the supporting infrastructure, but also maintain a business operation related to gaining initial access to lucrative targets, estimating the company's paying abilities, collecting the information on victims – all to [maximize](#) their profits.

From simple locker to multiple extortion

WannaCry ransomware demands were relatively low: from each victim, the ransomware asked for \$300, and doubling it to \$600, if the payment was not made in the first 3 days. Judging by the public reports, it wasn't such a successful operation money-wise with gains amounting to about \$143,000. Over time, it appeared, that the low payment rate is not only a WannaCry ransomware problem, but is in general, the issue with the whole ransomware business model.

In the next few years, the threat actors started to develop innovative ways to increase their paychecks. First, by switching to corporate targets, but later, also by applying additional pressure on them to pay. In 2020 the double extortion strategy in ransomware emerged and until today, it is considered a common practice in the ransomware world. Double extortion ransomware is a multi-stage ransomware attack that combines the traditional encryption of the victim's files and the exfiltration of their data outside the company, to attacker-controlled servers. The attacker then proves to the victim it has access to their sensitive data and threatens to release the breached data publicly unless the ransom payment is paid within the designated timeframe. This puts additional pressure on victims to meet the attackers' demands, as well as exposes the victim to potential penalties from data protection regulators. To strengthen the double extortion, most of the ransomware gangs established shame blogs, where they post the names, and in some cases the data, of victims who are not willing to pay the ransom.

Making matters worse, at the end of 2020, the actors came up with additional ways to apply even more pressure on victims. Called "triple extortion", it includes demands based on the threat of additional infrastructure damage – such as DDoS attacks against victims' resources until they pay, or extortion using

threats to third parties. For example, in October 2020, the Vastaamo clinic in Finland announced it was the victim of a yearlong breach that culminated in extensive patient data theft and a ransomware attack. In addition to the ransom demanded from the healthcare provider itself, the attackers sent smaller ransom demands to individual patients threatening to publish their sensitive therapist session notes. The triple extortion idea was quickly adopted by other actors: one of the most notorious actors, the REvil gang, for example, provided their affiliates with a voice-scrambled VoIP calls to journalists and colleagues, using third-parties to apply more pressure to the victims.

#### A matter of the national security

Ransomware operations evolution always aimed to increase the ransomware payments. Over the years, ransomware gangs learned that high-profile targets might bring them more revenue. In 2018-2019, while most governmental organizations were not ready for the growing ransomware threat, ransomware affiliates spotted that the public sector, especially at the state and the municipal level, were easy targets – and those were ravaged by ransomware attacks. Some of them, like the US city of Baltimore, even had to battle ransomware attacks twice.

Rising stakes and the increasing profile of the targets peaked in May 2021, with a ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline, which shut down the major gasoline and jet fuel pipeline to large swaths of the South and the East Coast and led to fuel shortages. This incident, where a critical national infrastructure became hostage to ransomware, forced the U.S. government, and many others after that, to change their stance toward ransomware actors. They turned from preemptive and reactive measures to proactive offensive operations that targeted the ransomware operators themselves, as well as their funding and supporting infrastructures.

Following that, in the U.S., the Department of Justice (DoJ) defined ransomware as a national security threat, placing it at the same priority level as terrorism. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) administered its first sanctions against a Russian-operated virtual currency exchange SUEX, involved in ransomware payments, and published an updated advisory on sanction risks for ransomware payments. A few months later, the European Union and an additional 31 countries announced they would join the effort to disrupt additional cryptocurrency channels, in an attempt to cripple the money laundering process that often follows ransomware operations. The same month, the Australian Government issued its “Ransomware Action Plan”, which includes the formation of a new special task force and harsher punishments for ransomware actors.

These measures allowed for increased budgets to fight cybercrime and enhanced collaborative efforts across borders between various government and law enforcement agencies. Following law enforcement’s new stance, multiple ransomware operators and affiliates were apprehended in various countries. Among the most significant was the international joint operation led by Interpol named “Operation Cyclone” in November 2021. This resulted in the seizure of infrastructure and arrests of money laundering affiliates for Cl0p, the group responsible for the Accellion breach which caused numerous double and triple extortions throughout 2021. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice and other Federal agencies pursued further actions against REvil. These actions included members’ arrests, the seizure of US\$6 million US dollars in ransom money, confiscation of devices, and a bounty program worth US\$10 million. In January 2022, authorities in Russia reported they had dismantled the ransomware crime group REvil and charged several of its members. This was considered an unprecedented act of goodwill and marked a new era in ransomware business evolution.

#### Conclusion

Over the last five years, ransomware operations have made a long journey from random spray and pray emails to multi-million dollar businesses, conducting targeted and man-operated attacks affecting the organizations in almost any geographic location, and within any industry. While western countries, after all these years, started to take this problem utterly seriously, the ransomware economy still thrives mainly due to the local law enforcement agencies turning a blind eye to ransomware gangs, mostly based in Eastern Europe. With the current war between Russia and Ukraine, the future of law enforcement collaboration between Russia and western countries to stop the ransomware threat is not as bright as it seemed only a few months before. The ransomware shadow economy is fully based on cryptocurrencies,



and while the war unfolds, the sanctions imposed by the U.S. against crypto crime keep expanding rapidly. Only in April 2022, OFAC sanctioned Garantex, a virtual currency exchange, and the world's largest and most prominent darknet market, Hydra Market, in a coordinated international effort to disrupt the proliferation of malicious cybercrime services, dangerous drugs, and other illegal offerings.

Nevertheless, the example of North Korea-backed WannaCry is here to remind us again that the countries operating their economy under heavy sanctions tend to conduct and leverage cyber operations for their own purposes. So given the current situation, we cannot expect the Golden Era of ransomware to come to an end in the near future.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/11 Ransomware still remains a global threat</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.digitalshadows.com/blog-and-research/five-years-after-the-wannacry-dumpster-fire-ransomware-remains-a-global-threat/">https://www.digitalshadows.com/blog-and-research/five-years-after-the-wannacry-dumpster-fire-ransomware-remains-a-global-threat/</a>
GIST	<p>It has been five years since the dumpster fire we all remember as WannaCry. WannaCry is self-propagating ransomware that held hundreds of thousands of devices around the world hostage in 2017.</p> <p>While the WannaCry attack was catastrophic, the worm-like ransomware attack also served as a lesson for cybercriminals and network defenders alike. From a cybercriminal's perspective, it was a perfect example of what not to do. For network defenders, WannaCry highlighted the risks associated with destructive, self-propagating malware.</p> <p><b>A FATEFUL DAY IN MAY</b></p> <p>On 12 May 2017, WannaCry ransomware began spreading like wildfire through computer networks across the world, encrypting over 200,000 devices across 150 countries in 24 hours. WannaCry was considered "wormable", meaning the malware could self-propagate without any human interaction. A ransom note was displayed on compromised devices demanding a ransom of \$300 – \$600, which was much less than the average ransom demands from other ransomware groups at the time.</p> <p>WannaCry used the "EternalBlue" exploit that had been released by the Shadow Brokers threat group, who allegedly stole it previously from the United States National Security Agency (NSA). EternalBlue exploits a series of vulnerabilities in Microsoft's Server Message Block (SMB) protocol. Although Microsoft released a patch to address the vulnerabilities in March 2017, several computers remained unpatched.</p> <p>The backdoor "DoublePulsar" was used to maintain persistence and deliver the final WannaCry ransomware payload. WannaCry could scan the network and worm its way onto other vulnerable Windows devices.</p> <p><b>THE KILL SWITCH DOMAIN</b></p> <p>Hours after the campaign began, security researcher <a href="#">Marcus Hutchins</a> discovered a domain name listed in the code of WannaCry. The domain did not already exist, so Hutchins registered the domain name. Registering domains found in malware samples was a familiar practice for Hutchins as part of his role as a malware researcher.</p> <p>Hutchins and his colleague Jamie Hankins further inspected the code and realized that after deploying, WannaCry attempted to contact the domain. If the malware was unable to make contact with the domain, it would proceed to infect the device and encrypt the files. If the malware was able to make contact with the domain, it would not infect the system. Registering the domain acted as a kill switch, which is a mechanism used to shut down a device or in this case a piece of malware.</p> <p><b>WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?</b></p> <p>By the time the dust had settled, WannaCry had infected over 230,000 devices in 150 countries causing approximately <a href="#">\$4 billion</a> in damages. The National Health Service (NHS) in the UK was one organization known to be impacted by the attack, which led to several emergency rooms having to close their doors and</p>

thousands of medical appointments to be rescheduled. Routine and emergency surgeries were canceled as NHS staff were unable to access their devices.

The kill switch prevented additional computer systems from being infected, but there were still thousands of systems infected with WannaCry. This spread was exasperated by the minimal chances of victims receiving a decryption key from the attackers even after a ransom payment was made. This was due to WannaCry [not having a process](#) for determining which victims paid and which did not.

### **WHO WAS BEHIND THE ATTACK?**

The world was left wondering who was behind this disruptive attack. Several theories bubbled up to the surface in the days following the attack. On 18 May 2017, Digital Shadows applied the [Analysis of Competing Hypothesis](#) technique to determine the likelihood of each theory. At that time, we assessed that WannaCry may have been launched by an unsophisticated cybercriminal actor for several reasons including the poor coordination and implementation of the attack.

However, in May 2017 security researchers began connecting the dots and attributed the code to “APT38” (aka Lazarus), a North Korean state-sponsored threat group. On 18 Dec 2017, the United States publicly attributed the WannaCry attack to [North Korea](#). Four years later on 17 Feb 2021, three North Korean computer programmers were [indicted](#) for their part in several cyber crimes, including the creation of WannaCry ransomware. APT38 is known for carrying out financially-motivated attacks, which is unusual for a nation state threat group. Many North Korean APTs are financially-motivated. This may be due to sanctions that negatively impact North Korea’s economy.

### **THE CYBER UNDERGROUND WAS WATCHING ALONGSIDE DEFENDERS**

The cybercriminal community also likely learned several lessons from this impactful attack. WannaCry showed ransomware developers the importance of creating mechanisms to differentiate between victims. Failing to deliver a decryption key to a victim after a ransom payment is made is ultimately bad for business and could dissuade future victims from paying. Reputation is important for ransomware groups. Persuading victims that paying a ransom is the best choice allows these groups to make significant profits, which has been demonstrated by the remarkable escalation of ransomware activity since WannaCry.

In combination with the fatal payment flaw, the WannaCry attack had more victims than the attackers could handle, which quickly got out of hand. Communicating with thousands of victims across several time zones is physically and logistically challenging. This has also been demonstrated by the DarkSide ransomware group, who experienced these challenges during the [Colonial Pipeline](#) attack. The group had rules prohibiting attacks against critical infrastructure, but DarkSide likely experienced difficulties managing the actions of all of its affiliates.

Finally, the WannaCry attack exposed a worldwide patch management issue. Exploiting a single vulnerability in thousands of devices can have dire consequences. Network defenders know [patch management](#) is challenging because every environment has different dependencies and infrastructure. Cybercriminals are aware of this and exploiting vulnerabilities remains a top attack vector for many ransomware groups.

### **CONCLUSION**

Five years after the infamous WannaCry attack, ransomware remains arguably the biggest threat facing business. When ransomware attacks make headlines or impact an entire supply chain, the cyber security community tries to squeeze every last bit of information and evidence out of these events. This is for several reasons, but mainly for prevention and attribution. However, we have to understand that we are not the only ones watching and learning what not to do. As network defenders get smarter, so do cybercriminals. Ransomware remains one of the largest threats to organizations across the globe not because we are failing, but because cyber security professionals and cybercriminals alike are evolving.

The techniques, tactics, and procedures of ransomware groups have evolved since WannaCry, but several commonly exploiting attack vectors remain such as:

- Phishing ([T1566 Phishing](#))

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak or Stolen Credentials (<a href="#">T1078 Valid Accounts</a>)</li> <li>• Insecure remote access (<a href="#">T1133 External Remote Services</a>)</li> <li>• Software vulnerabilities (<a href="#">T1190 Exploit Public Facing Application</a>)</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Iran-linked hackers target US; ransomware</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/iranian-cyberspy-group-launching-ransomware-attacks-against-us">https://www.securityweek.com/iranian-cyberspy-group-launching-ransomware-attacks-against-us</a>
GIST	<p>Over the past several months, Iran-linked cyberespionage group Charming Kitten has been engaging in financially-motivated activities, the Secureworks Counter Threat Unit (CTU) reports.</p> <p>Also referred to as APT35, Magic Hound, NewsBeef, Newscaster, Phosphorus, and TA453, the advanced persistent threat (APT) actor is known for the targeting of activists, government organizations, journalists, and various other entities.</p> <p>In November 2021, a joint advisory from government agencies in the US, UK, and Australia warned of Iranian state-sponsored attacks targeting critical infrastructure and other organizations through the exploitation of Fortinet FortiOS vulnerabilities and a Microsoft Exchange ProxyShell bug.</p> <p>In a report in December 2021, Microsoft noted that <a href="#">Charming Kitten was showing high interest</a> in acquiring exploits targeting the Log4j vulnerability, to modify and use them in new attacks. In January 2022, the APT was observed using a <a href="#">new PowerShell backdoor</a>.</p> <p>Secureworks, which tracks the cyberespionage group as Cobalt Mirage, reported today that the group appears to have <a href="#">turned to financially-motivated attacks</a>, including the deployment of ransomware.</p> <p>The researchers note that, in January 2022, the threat actor leveraged previously obtained access to infiltrate the network of a philanthropic organization in the US, where they deployed a web shell that was later used to drop additional files.</p> <p>Named Dllhost.exe, one of these files is a Go binary that appears to be in part based on the Fast Reverse Proxy (FRP) code available on GitHub. When executed on a compromised Exchange server, dllhost.exe collects system information and sets up a communication tunnel with the command and control (C&amp;C) server.</p> <p>Next, the attackers conducted a Local Security Authority Server Service (LSASS) dump to hunt for user credentials. Three days later, they used Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) to log onto the Exchange server, likely a hands-on-keyboard operation.</p> <p>After enumerating the environment, the threat actor moved laterally and then “encrypted three user workstations with BitLocker, rendering them inaccessible to the compromised organization's staff,” Secureworks says.</p> <p>The attackers then sent a ransom note to a local printer, instructing the victim to make contact over email or Telegram to receive information on decryption and recovery.</p> <p>“This approach suggests a small operation that relies on manual processes to map victims to the encryption keys used to lock their data. As of this publication, CTU researchers are not aware of a Cobalt Mirage leak site. The victimology of the Cobalt Mirage attacks suggests that these threat actors are focused on financial gain.” Secureworks says.</p> <p>In March 2022, the same threat actor was observed compromising the network of a local US government, but no ransomware was deployed. Instead, the group focused on harvesting data and exfiltrating it using free online services.</p>

	<p>“After the March 2022 intrusion was detected and disrupted, no additional malicious activity was observed. CTU researchers have not directly observed ransomware attacks linked to [the activity], but there is evidence that those threat actors may be experimenting with ransomware,” Secureworks notes.</p> <p>The security researchers assess that, while the group has managed to compromise a large number of targets worldwide, “their ability to capitalize on that access for financial gain or intelligence collection appears limited.” However, the use of publicly available tools for ransomware operations shows that the group remains an ongoing threat, Secureworks concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Law enforcement data portal breach?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://krebsonsecurity.com/2022/05/dea-investigating-breach-of-law-enforcement-data-portal/">https://krebsonsecurity.com/2022/05/dea-investigating-breach-of-law-enforcement-data-portal/</a>
GIST	<p>The <b>U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration</b> (DEA) says it is investigating reports that hackers gained unauthorized access to an agency portal that taps into 16 different federal law enforcement databases. KrebsOnSecurity has learned the alleged compromise is tied to a cybercrime and online harassment community that routinely impersonates police and government officials to harvest personal information on their targets.</p> <p>On May 8, KrebsOnSecurity received a tip that hackers obtained a username and password for an authorized user of <b>esp.usdoj.gov</b>, which is the <b>Law Enforcement Inquiry and Alerts</b> (LEIA) system managed by the DEA.</p> <p>KrebsOnSecurity shared information about the allegedly hijacked account with the DEA, the <b>Federal Bureau of Investigation</b> (FBI), and the <b>Department of Justice</b>, which houses both agencies. The DEA declined to comment on the validity of the claims, issuing only a brief statement in response.</p> <p>“DEA takes cyber security and information of intrusions seriously and investigates all such reports to the fullest extent,” the agency said in a statement shared via email.</p> <p>According to <a href="#">this page</a> at the Justice Department website, LEIA “provides federated search capabilities for both EPIC and external database repositories,” including data classified as “law enforcement sensitive” and “mission sensitive” to the DEA.</p> <p>A <a href="#">document published by the Obama administration in May 2016</a> (PDF) says the DEA’s <a href="#">El Paso Intelligence Center</a> (EPIC) systems in Texas are available for use by federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement, as well as the Department of Defense and intelligence community.</p> <p>EPIC and LEIA also have access to the DEA’s <b>National Seizure System</b> (NSS), which the DEA uses to identify property thought to have been purchased with the proceeds of criminal activity (think fancy cars, boats and homes seized from drug kingpins).</p> <p>“The <b>EPIC System Portal (ESP)</b> enables vetted users to remotely and securely share intelligence, access the National Seizure System, conduct data analytics, and obtain information in support of criminal investigations or law enforcement operations,” the 2016 White House document reads. “Law Enforcement Inquiry and Alerts (LEIA) allows for a federated search of 16 Federal law enforcement databases.”</p> <p>The screenshots shared with this author indicate the hackers could use EPIC to look up a variety of records, including those for motor vehicles, boats, firearms, aircraft, and even drones.</p> <p>Claims about the purloined DEA access were shared with this author by “<b>KT</b>,” the current administrator of the <b>Doxbin</b> — a highly toxic online community that provides a forum for digging up personal information on people and posting it publicly.</p> <p>As KrebsOnSecurity reported earlier this year, the previous owner of the Doxbin has been <a href="#">identified as the leader</a> of <b>LAPSUS\$</b>, a data extortion group that hacked into some of the world’s largest tech companies this year — including Microsoft, NVIDIA, Okta, Samsung and T-Mobile.</p>

That reporting also showed how the core members of LAPSUS\$ were involved in [selling a service offering fraudulent Emergency Data Requests](#) (EDRs), wherein the hackers use compromised police and government email accounts to file warrantless data requests with social media firms, mobile telephony providers and other technology firms, attesting that the information being requested can't wait for a warrant because it relates to an urgent matter of life and death.

From the standpoint of individuals involved in filing these phony EDRs, access to databases and user accounts within the Department of Justice would be a major coup. But the data in EPIC would probably be far more valuable to organized crime rings or drug cartels, said **Nicholas Weaver**, a researcher for the [International Computer Science Institute](#) at **University of California, Berkeley**.

Weaver said it's clear from the screenshots shared by the hackers that they could use their access not only to view sensitive information, but also submit false records to law enforcement and intelligence agency databases.

"I don't think these [people] realize what they got, how much money the cartels would pay for access to this," Weaver said. "Especially because as a cartel you don't search for yourself you search for your enemies, so that even if it's discovered there is no loss to you of putting things ONTO the DEA's radar."

## ANALYSIS

The login page for esp.usdoj.gov (above) suggests that authorized users can access the site using [a "Personal Identity Verification" or PIV card](#), which is a fairly strong form of authentication used government-wide to control access to federal facilities and information systems at each user's appropriate security level.

However, the EPIC portal also appears to accept just a username and password, which would seem to radically diminish the security value of requiring users to present (or prove possession of) an authorized PIV card. Indeed, KT said the hacker who obtained this illicit access was able to log in using the stolen credentials alone, and that at no time did the portal prompt for a second authentication factor.

It's not clear why there are still sensitive government databases being protected by nothing more than a username and password, but I'm willing to bet big money that this DEA portal is not only offender here. The DEA portal esp.usdoj.gov is listed on *Page 87* of [a Justice Department "data inventory,"](#) which catalogs all of the data repositories that correspond to DOJ agencies.

*There are 3,330 results.* Granted, only some of those results are login portals, but that's just within the Department of Justice.

If we assume for the moment that state-sponsored foreign hacking groups can gain access to sensitive government intelligence in the same way as teenage hacker groups like LAPSUS\$, then it is long past time for the U.S. federal government to perform a top-to-bottom review of authentication requirements tied to any government portals that traffic in sensitive or privileged information.

I'll say it because it needs to be said: The United States government is in urgent need of leadership on cybersecurity at the executive branch level — preferably someone who has the authority and political will to eventually disconnect *any* federal government agency data portals that fail to enforce strong, multi-factor authentication.

I realize this may be far more complex than it sounds, particularly when it comes to authenticating law enforcement personnel who access these systems without the benefit of a PIV card or government-issued device (state and local authorities, for example). It's not going to be as simple as just turning on multi-factor authentication for every user, thanks in part to a broad diversity of technologies being used across the law enforcement landscape.



	But when hackers can plunder 16 law enforcement databases, arbitrarily send out law enforcement alerts for specific people or vehicles, or potentially disrupt ongoing law enforcement operations — all because someone stole, found or bought a username and password — it's time for drastic measures.
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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/12 US: ISIS prison camps 'unsustainable'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/2022/05/12/isis-prison-camps-unsustainable-as-syria-terror-threat-grows/">https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/2022/05/12/isis-prison-camps-unsustainable-as-syria-terror-threat-grows/</a>
GIST	<p>Keeping 10,000 <a href="#">ISIS</a> detainees in prison camps in north-east <a href="#">Syria</a> is not sustainable as the terrorist group tries to regain strength in the region, the <a href="#">US</a> warned on Thursday.</p> <p>An <a href="#">ISIS prison break in January</a> in Hassakeh, Syria, was a “perfect example of the risk” posed by the many foreign fighters being kept in the region, US deputy counter-terrorism chief Chris Landsberg said.</p> <p>There were talks on Wednesday in Morocco between dozens of countries in a global anti-ISIS coalition, stressing growing concerns about <a href="#">the threat of the group in Africa</a>.</p> <p>But ISIS retains a presence in <a href="#">Iraq</a> and Syria despite the loss of its territory three years ago. The group was described by <a href="#">France</a> as “disturbingly resilient” after ministers discussed its threat in those countries.</p> <p>“While the group has been considerably weakened there, it remains a threat and is still carrying out terrorist attacks at a concerning rate,” Mr Landberg said.</p> <p>He said the January attack in Hassakeh, in which many fighters from the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces were killed, was “a wake-up call and a reminder of their intent to reconstitute in the region”.</p> <p>Mr Landberg said about 10,000 fighters and 60,000 relatives were living in camps in that region, despite attempts to repatriate them.</p> <p>He said one problem was that a “significant portion” of the foreign fighters came from <a href="#">Russia</a> and <a href="#">China</a>, and that the US was not willing to work with those countries to repatriate citizens because it feared they will suffer inhumane treatment.</p> <p>“It’s an unsustainable situation in Hassakeh and we’re very concerned about it,” Mr Landberg said. “The January attack was a perfect example of the risk.”</p> <p>The US announced at the talks that it would seek to counter radicalisation in Syria by waiving sanctions to allow investment in parts of the country not controlled by President Bashar Al Assad’s regime.</p> <p>This is to help communities liberated from ISIS to control and stop the extremists “exploiting local grievances” to win support, Mr Landberg said.</p> <p>A separate summit on Syria heard this week that 90 per cent of Syrians in their home country were living in poverty and more than half struggling to feed themselves after 11 years of conflict.</p> <p>That conference in Brussels ended with countries committing about \$6.7 billion to support humanitarian assistance in Syria.</p> <p>But western powers said they would not pay for the country’s reconstruction until there were signs of progress in political dialogue.</p>

	“The resurgence in past months of [ISIS] attacks in the north-east of Syria and elsewhere requires continuous collective efforts to counter these worrying developments,” a final statement from the donor conference said.
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 ISIS attacks Sinai water-pumping station</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/05/islamic-state-claims-attack-near-suez-canal">https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/05/islamic-state-claims-attack-near-suez-canal</a>
GIST	<p>CAIRO — On May 7, a group of militants <a href="#">attacked a water pumping station</a> east of the Suez Canal, leaving one officer and 10 troops dead, while five others were injured in the clashes that subsequently erupted, according to Egyptian military spokesperson <a href="#">Gharib Abdel Hafez</a>.</p> <p>On May 8, Egyptian President <a href="#">Abdel Fattah al-Sisi</a> met with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to discuss the attack, one of the deadliest against Egyptian forces in the Sinai in recent years. Sisi instructed the army to pursue the terrorists and continue combatting terrorism in all its forms.</p> <p>On May 9, the <a href="#">Islamic State</a> claimed responsibility for the armed attack via <a href="#">Telegram</a>.</p> <p>Maher Farghali, a freelance researcher on terrorist groups, told Al-Monitor that the May 7 terrorist attack reveals qualitative changes in the militants’ strategy in Sinai.</p> <p>“Terrorists have targeted a civilian facility in Sinai for the first time. Their <a href="#">attacks</a> in the past would usually focus on army outposts in the cities of Arish, Rafah, and Sheikh Zuweid in North Sinai,” Farghali said.</p> <p>Just days after the attack at the water pumping station, on May 11, <a href="#">one Egyptian officer and four soldiers</a> were killed in another attack on a military checkpoint near the city of Rafah in North Sinai. No group has claimed responsibility so far.</p> <p>Brig. Gen. Khaled Okasha, head of the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies, told Al-Monitor that the terrorist organizations' targeting of civilian facilities with limited security shows that they have weakened.</p> <p>On Feb. 9, 2018, the Egyptian military <a href="#">launched</a> a major operation to eliminate terrorists from Sinai. The operation, dubbed Sinai 2018, has tightened state control over ports and killed over 1,000 alleged terrorists so far.</p> <p>Okasha said, “Operation Sinai 2018 has been a success. Terrorists have not been able to carry out attacks such as the <a href="#">al-Rawdah Mosque attack</a>, which killed hundreds of worshippers since the operation was launched.”</p> <p>On Nov. 26, 2017, gunmen targeted the <a href="#">al-Rawdah Mosque</a> in the city of Arish in North Sinai, killing over 300 worshippers in the deadliest attack in Egypt’s modern history.</p> <p>Okasha commented that in the wake of the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, IS attempted to sow chaos and instability in Sinai. He explained that completely eliminating IS will take time, as the Sinai Peninsula's geography offers terrorists convenient places to hide and carry out their plans.</p> <p>Hoda al-Mallah, director of the <a href="#">International Center for Economic Consulting and Feasibility Studies</a>, told Al-Monitor that the May 7 attack, which occurred near the Suez Canal, may harm the canal’s international reputation.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Suez Canal</a> is Egypt’s second source of foreign income after tourism, generating annual revenues of approximately \$5.5 billion. About <a href="#">12% of the total global trade</a> passes through the canal, while exports of crude and refined oil and gas through the waterway represent 5% to 10% of global shipments.</p> <p>Mallah noted that should there be any more such attacks, people could lose confidence in the security and stability of the Suez Canal, one of the most important sources of Egypt’s national income, at a time when</p>



	<p>Egypt is suffering from severe economic issues including a clear <a href="#">decline in tourism</a> and a decrease in cash reserves following the Russian-Ukrainian war.</p> <p>Egypt was greatly affected by the <a href="#">Russian attack</a> on Ukraine as the import of Russian and Ukrainian <a href="#">wheat</a> was suspended and tourism dropped. Russians and Ukrainians used to <a href="#">make up 30% to 40%</a> of tourists to Egypt.</p> <p>Mallah called on the international community to unite, cooperate and support Egypt in its war against terrorism as attacks on civilian facilities will harm not only Egypt, but the entire global economy.</p> <p>On May 9, Sisi met with Lt. Gen. <a href="#">Michael Corella</a>, commander of the US Central Command, during his visit to Cairo and discussed military and security cooperation between Egypt and the United States to combat terrorism through joint training programs and securing borders.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Africa 'fastest growing' terrorist hotspot</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/12/islamic-state-africa-sahel-terrorist-groups-counterterrorism/">https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/12/islamic-state-africa-sahel-terrorist-groups-counterterrorism/</a>
GIST	<p><b>After Failures in Middle East, Islamic State Finds Success in Africa</b> If the Middle East was the birthplace of the Islamic State, Africa is where the terrorist group is now undergoing its biggest growth spurt.</p> <p>Top U.S. counterterrorism officials and diplomats met with their foreign counterparts in Marrakech, Morocco, this week for an annual gathering of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, where the attendees acknowledged the terrorist group was gaining ground fastest in Africa.</p> <p><b>Like a phoenix from the ashes.</b> After years of military failures in Syria and Iraq, Islamic State affiliates—as well as other insurgent and criminal groups that have adopted the Islamic State brand—have expanded control and stepped up their attacks on civilian and military targets in some of the most politically unstable regions of West Africa. These groups often exploit local grievances and poor governance to muscle their way into power in regions of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.</p> <p><b>The official lines.</b> There was a litany of grim quotes from top U.S. and foreign officials coming out of the gathering in Marrakech this week, which included representatives from some 80 countries. Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita warned that the Sahel region of Africa is now “home to the world’s fastest-growing and most deadly terrorist groups.”</p> <p>“Most troubling is the ISIS affiliates that are currently active in the sub-Saharan continent because the numbers are extraordinary, and they have a lot of territory to play around with,” Doug Hoyt, the acting deputy U.S. envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, told <a href="#">Voice of America</a> ahead of the international gathering.</p> <p><b>ISIS’s rise in Africa by the numbers.</b> Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48 percent of global terrorism deaths in 2021, according to the <a href="#">Global Terrorism Index 2022</a> report released by the Institute for Economics and Peace.</p> <p>The Islamic State in West Africa affiliate is estimated to have around 5,000 fighters in its ranks across Nigeria and Niger, as well as neighboring Cameroon. Another branch, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, which operates near the Gulf of Guinea, has an estimated 1,000 fighters. An Islamic State affiliate in Mozambique has an estimated 1,200 fighters, and the Islamic State also has a smaller presence in Libya and Somalia.</p> <p><b>Insert “Mission Accomplished” banner here.</b> Despite the grave warnings, European countries that have long kept a military presence in West Africa supporting counterterrorism campaigns—namely France—are drawing down their mission after heated disputes with a new ruling junta in Mali that took power in a coup in 2020.</p>

Denying that a counterterrorism campaign ended in failure, shortly before it ends in failure, has become a time-honored tradition for Western leaders, and Mali proved no exception: French President Emmanuel Macron [denied](#) that France's counterterrorism mission in Mali failed as French troops withdrew and the terrorist groups gained ground.

It didn't help that the U.S. and European counterterrorism strategy was to band with brittle, autocratic, and [coup-prone](#) governments in the region to fight the terrorists, even when it was those poorly governed autocracies that provided the [breeding ground](#) for terrorism's spread in the first place.

**And guess who's filling the vacuum?** There's still a sizable U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali, known as MINUSMA. But a new player has entered the arena with Western countries withdrawing: none other than Vladimir Putin.

Despite the Russian president's costly war in Ukraine, Moscow is eager to wind its tendrils around the region, beefing up its presence in Mali with military advisors and mercenaries operating for the Kremlin-linked Wagner Group—who, by the way, are already implicated in war crimes such as [staging atrocities](#) to blame on France.

More worrying is the fact that the new Russian friends of Mali's government don't have the numbers or expertise to actually stave off the growing rise of terrorist groups (let alone any affinity for human rights concerns).

As one senior U.S. diplomat [told us previously](#): "A thousand Wagner folks ain't going to fill the security void in Mali. ... They may be killing terrorists, but they are also killing so many civilians."

This, in turn, likely creates new recruits for those terrorist groups. And the cycle begins again.

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HEADLINE	05/12 Bombing targets Pakistan security forces
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-bombings-karachi-45d299b6982481b73236b12888b62666">https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-bombings-karachi-45d299b6982481b73236b12888b62666</a>
GIST	<p>KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — A roadside bombing targeted a van carrying Pakistani security forces in the southern port city of Karachi on Thursday, killing a passerby and wounding 13 people, police said.</p> <p>According to Sajjad Khan, a local police chief, the attack took place in the city's Saddar neighborhood. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing but Karachi has witnessed several militant attacks in recent years.</p> <p>Rescuers took the victims to a hospital, where some of the wounded were said to be in critical condition. Khan said the explosion was so powerful that it damaged several cars in the busy area, known for its restaurants. The police chief provided no further details and only said two members of the security forces were among the wounded.</p> <p>Local TV footage showed police officers and bomb experts examining vehicles damaged in the bombing. Karachi is the capital of southern Sindh province.</p> <p>Last month, a woman suicide bomber dressed in a female burqa head-to-toe covering killed three Chinese teachers and their Pakistani driver when she detonated her explosives inside a university campus in Karachi.</p> <p>A separatist group known as the Baluchistan Liberation Army from the neighboring Baluchistan province claimed that attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/13 Pakistan hands over 2 TTP to Taliban
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/islamabad-hands-over-two-top-commanders-of-ttp-to-afghan-taliban-122051300015_1.html">https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/islamabad-hands-over-two-top-commanders-of-ttp-to-afghan-taliban-122051300015_1.html</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Pakistan</a> has handed over two top commanders of the Tehrik-e <a href="#">Taliban Pakistan</a> (TTP) to the Afghan Taliban, which has been mediating peace talks between the two sides, as part of efforts to revive negotiations with the militant group, RFE/RL reported.</p> <p>Muslim Khan and Mehmood Khan were recently transferred from a military detention facility to the custody of the Afghan <a href="#">Taliban</a> in Pakistan's northwestern tribal belt, said sources with knowledge of the matter.</p> <p>The move came as a delegation of senior Pakistani military officials arrived in Kabul on May 9 for talks with the TTP leadership, said sources with knowledge of the negotiations.</p> <p>As a confidence-building measure, the TTP agreed a temporary cease-fire from May 10 to 15, according to a decree issued by the TTP leadership and seen by RFE/RL. The militant group had announced a unilateral truce from April 29 to May 9 to mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan and the start of the Eid holiday.</p> <p>The talks between the Pakistani delegation and the TTP are being mediated by the Afghan Taliban, which has close ideological and organizational ties with the TTP. The Afghan militant group is also a longtime ally of Islamabad, its main foreign sponsor.</p> <p>The negotiations came as the TTP, also known as the Pakistani Taliban, has intensified its attacks in <a href="#">Pakistan</a> since a monthlong cease-fire expired and peace talks collapsed in December, RFE/RL reported.</p> <p>Since then, Islamabad has sent secret delegations to <a href="#">Afghanistan</a> to hold talks with the TTP on reviving the expired truce and resuming talks over a negotiated end to the TTP's 14-year insurgency in Pakistan, where thousands of people have been killed in militant attacks and clashes between the TTP and the military.</p> <p>The TTP has demanded the release of 102 commanders and fighters in Pakistani prisons. Pakistan had released most of the TTP prisoners but had been reluctant to free Muslim Khan and Mehmood Khan.</p> <p>The TTP has also demanded the implementation of Islamic Shar'ia law in Pakistan's tribal belt, a demand that observers said the government would likely reject.</p> <p>The two commanders will be released from the custody of the Afghan <a href="#">Taliban</a> once the TTP agrees a permanent cease-fire with Islamabad, said a source with knowledge of the negotiations, RFE/RL reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 White supremacists in law enforcement</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/prevalence-white-supremacists-law-enforcement-demands-drastic-change-2022-05-12/">https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/prevalence-white-supremacists-law-enforcement-demands-drastic-change-2022-05-12/</a>
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - A Reuters <a href="#">investigation</a> on May 6 indicates that a significant number of U.S. police instructors have ties to a constellation of armed right-wing militias and white supremacist hate groups, a report that adds to a fast-growing body of evidence showing a deadly threat inside U.S. police departments.</p> <p>The analysis found that some of the instructional information presented by police trainers was explicitly racist, and that some instructors endorsed and interacted with white supremacist criminal groups such as the <a href="#">Proud Boys</a>.</p> <p>The investigation adds to mounting <a href="#">academic research</a>, <a href="#">government audits</a> and <a href="#">news reporting</a> that demonstrates the pervasiveness of white supremacy in U.S. law enforcement, and a continuing series of incidents documenting the presence of extremist groups and views among law enforcement.</p>

More and more, the evidence suggests the “white supremacist infiltration of law enforcement” that the FBI [warned about](#) back in 2006 is getting worse. And it points to a desperate need for policies – departmental and legislative – to prohibit people who engage in racist conduct or join white supremacist groups from becoming police officers or remaining on the force.

Lawmakers in Washington state, for example, enacted legislation last year that requires departments to inquire into police candidates’ ties to extremist groups and allows the state to revoke their certification if they are affiliated with those organizations, as NPR reported in November 2021. And California legislators are considering a similar measure.

The analysis by Reuters found at least 15 self-identified law enforcement trainers and dozens of retired instructors listed in a database of members of the Oath Keepers, one of several violent anti-government groups that led the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

One of the trainers was a “constitutional sheriff” proponent, a philosophy which holds that sheriffs have ultimate power to decide what local law is, rather than simply to enforce it – and which can be traced back to a racist movement to oppose legal desegregation in the 1950s and 60s.

“The phenomenon of groupthink is known to exist in law enforcement, and ideologies and world views tend to spread,” Vida Johnson, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center who studies police culture, told me. “It’s certainly disturbing when any higher-up, and particularly a trainer, doesn’t believe everyone they’re policing and charged with keeping safe is equal.”

Johnson documented the foundational relationship between American policing and white supremacy in a 2019 law review [article](#), going back to its origins in slave patrols, and drawing a clear through-line to the present.

The article describes a continuing “epidemic of white supremacists in police departments,” citing a litany of examples of explicit police racism through the decades, including reporting that exposed police officers’ membership in the Ku Klux Klan in Texas in 2001, and in Florida, in 2014.

A federal judge in Los Angeles found that local sheriff’s deputies were involved in a neo-Nazi, white supremacist gang that targeted Black and Latino people more than 25 years ago, in 1991, Johnson said. Yet Los Angeles is still dealing with racist gangs in its police department [even today](#).

“There have been scandals in over 100 different police departments, in over 40 different states” involving explicit police racism, Johnson wrote in 2019.

Johnson published additional [research](#) this year, in the wake of the Jan. 6 attack at the Capitol, documenting even more “high-profile instances of explicit racial bias” by cops that emerged in just the year or so following the 2019 article, including police officers in Wilmington, North Carolina, who inadvertently recorded themselves in 2020 fantasizing about murdering Black residents during a race war.

A number of additional high-profile examples of explicit police racism have emerged even in the few months since Johnson’s article was published earlier this year. Government investigations released just last month found widespread racism, bigotry and anti-immigrant sentiment within the [Minneapolis](#) Police Department and in police agencies [across California](#), for example.

The threat has also been widely acknowledged since at least 2006 by the federal government -- which is currently working to address its own white supremacy problem in [immigration agencies](#) and the [military](#).

The FBI [said](#) last year that the top domestic violent extremist threat facing the U.S. is from “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, specifically those who advocate for the superiority of the white race.”

	<p>Yet few law enforcement agencies have policies that specifically prohibit joining white supremacist groups or extremist militias, and police departments usually respond to bias with a slap on the wrist, according to a 2020 <a href="#">report</a> on explicit racism in police departments by the Brennan Center for Justice.</p> <p>The success of Washington state's new policies will depend in large part on how police departments react. Other efforts to empower agencies to fire officers with discriminatory or anti-government views have met resistance from police unions, The New York Times reported in May 2021.</p> <p>Still, enacting laws and internal policies that make it clear that explicit discrimination and membership in hate groups is incompatible with the duties of a police officer is a necessary first step.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Canada: threat violent extremism rising</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/pandemic-ideological-violent-extremism-1.6451633">https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/pandemic-ideological-violent-extremism-1.6451633</a>
GIST	<p>The threat of violent extremism has increased in Canada during the pandemic — fuelled by misinformation and resulting in threats to politicians and public servants — top security and policing officials told members of Parliament on Thursday.</p> <p>But while police and intelligence agencies are taking steps to detect extremists and prevent them from carrying out attacks, the government must also work proactively to counter the extremism in the first place, they added.</p> <p>Testifying before the public safety and national security committee, Cherie Henderson, assistant director, requirements for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) described the rise of ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) over the past two years.</p> <p>"Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, IMVE activity has been fuelled by an increase in extreme anti-authority and anti-government rhetoric, often rooted in the weaponization of conspiracy theories," Henderson told the committee.</p> <p>"CSIS has noted a marked increase in violent threats addressed at elected officials and public servants."</p> <p>Henderson said CSIS has moved more resources to monitor IMVE.</p> <p>The hearing came only a couple of days after an ugly altercation in Peterborough, Ont., where protesters <a href="#">shouted profanities at NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh</a> after a provincial election campaign event.</p> <p>That incident appeared to weigh on the minds of some committee members Thursday as they wrapped up their hearings on IMVE.</p> <p>"This has been a very sombre time for the NDP caucus," said New Democrat MP Alistair MacGregor.</p> <p>"Our leader Jagmeet Singh had to wade through a group of people who were calling him a traitor. They were hurling expletives at him, saying they hoped that he would die," he said.</p> <p>"This is the exact same kind of behaviour that we saw littered throughout the occupation of Ottawa and it's time for us to wake up to the fact that this kind of behaviour has real, physical manifestations and real threats."</p> <p>Liberal MP Pam Damoff said she and other MPs have received threats but that they don't necessarily lead to criminal charges.</p> <p>"It feels like it's a matter of time before this rhetoric and this kind of aggressive anger turn into something more violent," she said.</p>

RCMP Deputy Commander Michael Duheme said the Mounties have also seen a rise in IMVE incidents, most by people "who are not clearly affiliated with a group and who are motivated by very individualized ideologies."

Duheme said the RCMP has identified gaps in how it has dealt with IMVE and has developed a strategy to address them over the next three years and to work with local police forces and other groups.

By "improving information sharing and building up our own intelligence capacities," specifically online, the RCMP will "be in a better position to identify individuals and groups who pose a threat before they are motivated to violence," he said.

Leslie Soper, director general of national security policy for the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, described IMVE as "a serious threat" to Canada.

While some people on the right of the political spectrum are drawn to IMVE, such extremists come from a wide range of political perspectives, she said.

"It may be aligned to what we might traditionally call right-wing extremism. It may be motivated by other factors; anti-mandate. It could be motivated by other societal factors," Soper said.

Earlier, Conservative MP Dane Lloyd challenged Soper and CSIS officials to tell him what they were doing to investigate 30 churches that were set on fire in 2021. Both responded that those were police matters.

Richard Fadden, a former national security adviser and director of CSIS, said IMVE has been around for a while but it is now more intense, organized and co-ordinated.

Fadden said if Canada wants to counter IMVE, it must get to the roots of the dissatisfaction felt by those attracted to it, and their feeling that their views aren't being heard.

Fadden called for more dialogue with those being attracted to IMVE, saying countering it needs to go beyond the federal government to provinces, municipalities and schools.

However, he also acknowledged it can be difficult these days to talk openly about some things.

"I really do think that political correctness has reached the point today where it's almost impossible to have a conversation about a whole raft of issues and if you're frustrated with government and with society to begin with, this is not helpful," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Child malnutrition mounts northeast Nigeria</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/child-malnutrition-mounts-amid-conflict-northeast-nigeria-84690618">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/child-malnutrition-mounts-amid-conflict-northeast-nigeria-84690618</a>
GIST	<p>MAIDUGURI, Nigeria -- Iza Ali's five children are still waiting to eat at 3 p.m. It's not the first day that the family has gone without food since they fled extremist violence in northeast Nigeria six years ago.</p> <p>She and her husband scrape together \$3 a day, but it's rarely enough to feed the family of seven. Often they scavenge for greens outside the Jere displacement camp where they live on the outskirts of Maiduguri.</p> <p>"If we don't see food, we drink water," the 25-year-old mother says, her 4-month-old tugging at her dress. "Only God can help us."</p> <p>Aid agencies are warning that families like hers are increasingly at risk amid lower food production this year in Nigeria and as global humanitarian funds are being diverted as a result of the war in Ukraine.</p>



Acute malnutrition has soared from affecting 1.4 million children in the northeast to 1.7 million in the last year, according to Priscilla Bayo Nicholas, a nutrition specialist with the U.N. children's agency in Nigeria's Borno state. In 2017, the number was just 400,000.

"If we don't treat them, we will lose these children," she warned.

Like Ali, many in northeast Nigeria have had their livelihoods destroyed since 2009 when extremists started waging an insurgency in Africa's most populous country. The attacks carried out by Boko Haram and its offshoot — the Islamic State in West Africa Province — have killed more than 35,000 people in Nigeria and neighboring Chad, Niger and Cameroon while at least 2.1 million people have been displaced, according to U.N. figures.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres met with displaced Nigerians last week while in Maiduguri as he wrapped up his West African three-nation tour in a "visit of solidarity with the victims of terrorism."

"I saw smiles. I saw enthusiasm. I saw hope," Guterres said. "And this is where we must invest," he added, calling for an additional \$351 million as part of the overall \$1.1 billion for the U.N. humanitarian response plan for Nigeria.

Those who are displaced, however, say their hopes are dimming each day.

At the Banki displacement camp near the Cameroonian border, U.N. staffers are caring for more than 50,000 people displaced by violence. The camp is surrounded by heavily armed soldiers, and filled with women and children whose futures are uncertain.

Patched with bandages and with visible wounds, children suffering from acute malnutrition lay on beds under the watchful gaze of their mothers and caregivers inside the camp's nutrition center.

Here 20-month-old Mbolena rubs his swollen stomach, which hangs over his tiny body and visible veins. His mother Isa Ali says she's thankful that at least "he is feeling better now." Beside his bed, Maryam Hassan cuddles her severely wounded baby passionately as he clings to life.

Many more children are trapped in places that humanitarian workers are unable to access because of security risks, Nicholas told The AP.

Gomezgani Jenda, with Save the Children International's Nigerian office, said conflict exacerbates the problems already faced by children in the region.

"The humanitarian situation affecting children in these areas continues to be a challenge with an urgent need that is even greater than before," Jenda said.

In many displacement camps in Nigeria, government agencies provide food while aid agencies mostly focus on educational and health needs. But the amount that comes from the Nigerian government relief agency every two months rarely last more than a few days, said Mala Bukar, chairman of the Jere camp.

The nation's ministry of humanitarian affairs did not respond to an inquiry from The AP.

Nigerian authorities have started closing some of the displacement camps as part of efforts to return people to their hometowns abandoned in a war that the nation's leader President Muhammadu Buhari said last week was "approaching its conclusion."

More than 50,000 Islamic militants have surrendered, according to the Nigerian military. However, the International Crisis Group has said that the most dominant faction, ISWAP, is "consolidating its grip on new rural areas," in parts of Borno state.



	<p>Ali wants the violence to stop there so she and her husband and five children can return home and farm again. However, impending attacks haunt her, so she remains displaced.</p> <p>“We want to go back,” she said. But only “if the bush is cleared and there are no Boko Haram members that will kill us.”</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Hay shortages strain animal rescues</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/hay-shortages-impact-animal-rescues-cold-spring-contributing-to-shortages">https://www.q13fox.com/news/hay-shortages-impact-animal-rescues-cold-spring-contributing-to-shortages</a>
GIST	<p>SNOHOMISH, Wash. - A drought last year and a cold, wet start to 2022 caused a new crisis for many farmers, ranchers, and those that care for livestock: a shortage of hay, alfalfa and other feed crops.</p> <p>That shortage has caused some horses, cows and other livestock to go hungry.</p> <p>When the cost of caring for animals becomes too great, that can mean more surrenders to animal rescue operations like Pasado's Safe Haven in Snohomish County.</p> <p>"This is just some of our 200 animals," said Pasado's Safe Haven Director Stephanie Perciful as cows Belle, Abbey Rise and Blue enjoyed hay in their barn. "We also have goats, pigs and alpacas, all of who are dependent on hay."</p> <p>Perciful says the animals at Pasado's eat through around 250 hay bales per month.</p> <p>"We purchase every two months and 20% was our most recent jump," she said. "We've been lucky that our supplier has had hay, but what we've seen is the prices steadily go up."</p> <p>She says they typically spend around \$55,000 on hay yearly at the sanctuary. Perciful says the staff is planning to increase the budget to \$70,000 to \$80,000 in the next fiscal year to encompass the rising cost of hay.</p> <p>She pointed out that the haven's donkeys, Jacques and Ole, are an example of the impact of high prices. Perciful says they previously came to Pasado's Safe Haven from another rescue that could no longer afford to care for them.</p> <p>"We were able to help out another organization," she said. "The hay shortage is something we've been focused on for quite some time."</p> <p>Perciful says malnourishment is nearly always an issue in neglect cases. She says when prices climb, the animals that are surrendered often come to the sanctuary in worse condition.</p> <p>"It's inevitable that whenever hay prices are so high, and then we are looking at potential feed prices are so high, the animals are going to come to us in even worse condition," said Perciful.</p> <p>At Bob's Corn and Pumpkin farm near Snohomish, owner Bob Ricci is storing equipment in the barn where the hay would typically be stacked.</p> <p>"A normal year, we'd already have the whole first cutting. It would already be complete," said Ricci. "Usually the end of April, the first week of May. All of the farmers are in the same boat, we are patiently waiting."</p> <p>He says the cold spring has delayed the cutting for farmers across Washington.</p>

"We have not been able to harvest it because the rain and the cold just won't let go. We need a 3-day, dry window, and it's been a struggle to get that," said Ricci.

Hay is a crop that's been in high demand since last summer and fall due to wildfires that destroyed rangeland in the West.

"I had a guy call me from Northern California, when the wildfires were taking over. It was burning up their range land," he said.

Ricci says drought also wiped out inventories last year, causing people to search for hay in other states.

"In Montana they didn't get their normal yield. It was about half. It was so hot they only got one cutting," he said of last year's crop in that state.

Ricci says rising fuel prices likely will cause the price of crops to go up even further in the months ahead. He pointed to one of his tractors adding, "It used to cost about \$100 to fill it up with fuel and this year, it's going to cost about \$500."

Ricci says despite the cost, demand remains high and people have already started calling him for hay.

"I'll be surprised if any of the hay actually makes it into this barn. I foresee a lot of it selling the day it's baled in the field, people coming right up to the field and picking it out of the field," said Ricci.  
"Everybody is pretty desperate for hay. Once it comes in, and it's available, it's going to go."

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HEADLINE	05/12 Russell Wilson returns to Seattle																		
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/sports/russell-wilson-reunion-on-mnf-kicks-off-seahawks-2022-schedule">https://www.q13fox.com/sports/russell-wilson-reunion-on-mnf-kicks-off-seahawks-2022-schedule</a>																		
GIST	<p>Russell Wilson and the Denver Broncos will be in Seattle for a Monday Night Football matchup with the <a href="#">Seahawks</a> to kick off the 2022 NFL season.</p> <p>Wilson, the Seahawks' starting quarterback for the last 10 seasons, will immediately make his return trip to Seattle with his new team to begin his Broncos career.</p> <p>The Seahawks first road game of the year will be in Week 2 against the San Francisco 49ers in a 1:05 p.m. start on FOX.</p> <p>The Seahawks are traveling to Munich, Germany for a game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Nov. 13. The game is a Buccaneers home game and will be the second time Seattle has played a regular season game internationally. The Seahawks beat the Oakland Raiders 27-3 at Wembley Stadium in London in 2018. Seattle will get its bye week the following week at they return home.</p> <p>During the 17-week regular season, FOX 13 will air at least 12 Seahawks games, because FOX is the home television network for the NFC. FOX 13 will also air a full lineup of local Seahawks programming this fall that includes live pre-game and post-game coverage and Blue Friday celebrations on "Good Day Seattle."</p> <p><b>2022 Seahawks Schedule:</b></p> <table><tr><th></th><th>Date</th><th>Team</th><th>Kickoff (PT)</th><th>TV</th></tr><tr><td>Week 1</td><td>Sept. 12</td><td>vs. Denver Broncos</td><td>5:15 p.m</td><td>ESPN/ABC</td></tr><tr><td>Week 2</td><td>Sept. 18</td><td>at San Francisco 49ers</td><td>1:05 p.m.</td><td>FOX</td></tr></table>					Date	Team	Kickoff (PT)	TV	Week 1	Sept. 12	vs. Denver Broncos	5:15 p.m	ESPN/ABC	Week 2	Sept. 18	at San Francisco 49ers	1:05 p.m.	FOX
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Week 1	Sept. 12	vs. Denver Broncos	5:15 p.m	ESPN/ABC															
Week 2	Sept. 18	at San Francisco 49ers	1:05 p.m.	FOX															

Week 3	Sept. 25	vs. Atlanta Falcons	1:25 p.m.	FOX	
Week 4	Oct. 2	at Detroit Lions	10:00 a.m.	FOX	
Week 5	Oct. 9	at New Orleans Saints	10:00 a.m.	FOX	
Week 6	Oct. 16	vs. Arizona Cardinals	1:05 p.m.	FOX	
Week 7	Oct. 23	at Los Angeles Chargers	1:25 p.m.	FOX	
Week 8	Oct. 30	vs. New York Giants	1:25 p.m.	FOX	
Week 9	Nov. 6	at Arizona Cardinals	1:05 p.m.	FOX	
Week 10	Nov. 13	at Tampa Bay Buccaneers (Munich)	6:30 a.m.	NFL	
Week 11	Nov. 20	BYE WEEK			
Week 12	Nov. 27	vs. Las Vegas Raiders	1:05 p.m.	CBS	
Week 13	Dec. 4	at Los Angeles Rams	1:05 p.m.	FOX	
Week 14	Dec. 11	vs. Carolina Panthers	1:25 p.m.	FOX	
Week 15	Dec. 15	vs. San Francisco 49ers (TNF)	5:15 p.m.	FOX/Amazon	
Week 16	Dec. 24	at Kansas City Chiefs	10:00 a.m.	FOX	
Week 17	Jan. 1	vs. New York Jets	1:05 p.m.	FOX	
Week 18	Jan. 7 or 8	vs. Los Angeles Rams	TBD	TBD	
<b>Preseason</b>					
Week 1	Aug. 13	at Pittsburgh Steelers	4:00 p.m.	KING	
Week 2	Aug. 18	vs. Chicago Bears	5:00 p.m.	ESPN	
Week 3	TBD	at Dallas Cowboys	TBD	KING	

Wilson started 158 games for Seattle over 10 years and posted a 104-53-1 record. He didn't miss any games during his first nine seasons with Seattle before a mallet finger injury last October required surgery and kept him out for three games. Wilson was a member of the Pro Bowl roster in nine of his 10 years in Seattle and a second-team All-Pro in 2019.

Wilson was traded to the Broncos with a fourth-round pick in March in a deal that gave Seattle quarterback Drew Lock, tight end Noah Fant, defensive lineman Shelby Harris, two first-round picks (2022 & 2023), two second-round picks (2022 & 2023) and a 2022 fifth-round pick.

The Seahawks took Mississippi State tackle Charles Cross and Minnesota defensive end Boye Mafe with the first- and second-round picks acquired from Denver this year. They traded down with the fifth-round

	<p>selection and took Ohio State defensive end Tyreke Smith and Lenoir-Rhyne receiver Dareke Young with the two remaining picks that came from the Wilson trade this year.</p> <p>The Broncos took Iowa State defensive tackle Eyioma Uwazurike with their selection acquired from Seattle.</p> <p>It will be just the second time the Seahawks have opened the regular season with a primetime game. They hosted the Green Bay Packers to begin the 2014 season on Thursday night after their Super Bowl XLVIII victory over the Broncos to end the 2013 season.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 Firefighters rescue parachutist stuck in tree</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/soldier-gets-help-from-firefighters-after-parachute-gets-him-stuck-in-tree-100-feet-high">https://komonews.com/news/local/soldier-gets-help-from-firefighters-after-parachute-gets-him-stuck-in-tree-100-feet-high</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>LAKEWOOD, Wash. – Pierce County firefighters helped a man Wednesday afternoon who was stuck in a tree about 100 feet in the air over a golf course.</p> <p>Hallie McCurdy, Deputy Chief with Pierce Co. Fire and Rescue, told KOMO News the man was a parachutist who had gotten stuck in a tree at American Lake Veterans Golf Course.</p> <p>The man was actually not injured at all, according to McCurdy, who said her firefighters had to trim some branches before bringing in the ladder.</p> <p>The man was able to climb down the ladder after it was near him and is now safe. McCurdy confirmed the man was a soldier, but was unable to say where he is stationed.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/12 First image of Milky Way's huge black hole</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/black-hole-milky-way-image-e482ee7b773b1053bcb296bbd9abea16">https://apnews.com/article/black-hole-milky-way-image-e482ee7b773b1053bcb296bbd9abea16</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The world's first image of the chaotic supermassive black hole at the center of our Milky Way galaxy doesn't portray a voracious cosmic destroyer but what astronomers Thursday called a "gentle giant" on a near-starvation diet.</p> <p>Astronomers believe nearly all galaxies, including our own, have these giant black holes at their bustling and crowded center, where light and matter cannot escape, making it extremely hard to get images of them. Light gets bent and twisted around by gravity as it gets sucked into the abyss along with superheated gas and dust.</p> <p>The colorized image unveiled Thursday is from an international consortium behind the Event Horizon Telescope, a collection of eight synchronized radio telescopes around the world. Getting a good image was a challenge; previous efforts found the black hole too jumpy.</p> <p>"It burbled and gurgled as we looked at it," the University of Arizona's Feryal Ozel said.</p> <p>She described it as a "gentle giant" while announcing the breakthrough along with other astronomers involved in the project. The picture also confirms Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity: The black hole is precisely the size that Einstein's equations dictate. It is about the size of the orbit of Mercury around our sun.</p> <p>Black holes gobble up galactic material but Ozel said this one is "eating very little." It's the equivalent to a person eating a single grain of rice over millions of years, another astronomer said.</p>

“Pictures of black holes are the hardest thing to think about,” said astronomer Andrea Ghez of the University of California, Los Angeles. She wasn’t part of the telescope team but earned a Nobel Prize for the discovery of the Milky Way’s black hole in the 1990s.

She said the image of “my baby” is exactly how it should be — an eerie-looking orange-red ring with utter blackness in the middle.

Scientists had expected the Milky Way’s black hole to be more violent, especially since the only other image from another galaxy shows a far bigger and more active black hole.

“It is the cowardly lion of black holes,” said project scientist Geoffrey C. Bower of Taiwan’s Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Because the black hole “is on a starvation diet” so little material is falling into the center, and that allows astronomers to gaze deeper, Bower said.

The Milky Way black hole is called Sagittarius A (with an asterisk denoting star). It’s near the border of Sagittarius and Scorpius constellations and is 4 million times more massive than our sun. Bower said it is probably more typical of what’s at the center of most galaxies, “just sitting there doing very little.”

It is incredibly hot, trillions of degrees, Ozel said.

The same telescope group released the first black hole image in 2019. The picture was from a galaxy 53 million light-years away that is 1,500 times bigger than the one in our galaxy. The Milky Way black hole is much closer, about 27,000 light-years away. A light year is 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion kilometers).

To get the picture, the eight telescopes had to coordinate so closely “in a process similar to everyone shaking hands with everyone else in the room,” said astronomer Vincent Fish of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

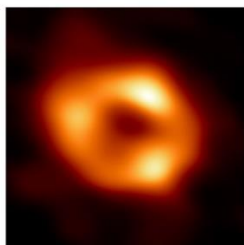
Astronomers worked with data collected in 2017 to get the new images. The next step is a movie of one of those two black holes, maybe both, Fish said.

The project cost nearly \$60 million with \$28 million coming from the U.S. National Science Foundation.

Even though it is quieter than expected, the center of the Milky Way is an important place to study, Ghez said.

It’s “like an urban downtown, everything is more extreme. It’s crowded. Things move fast,” Ghez said in an interview. “We live out in the suburbs (in a spiral arm of the galaxy). Things are calm out here.”

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This image released by the Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration on Thursday shows a black hole at the center of our Milky Way galaxy. The Milky Way black hole is called Sagittarius A\*, near the border of Sagittarius and Scorpius constellations. It is 4 million times more massive than our sun. The image was made by eight synchronized radio telescopes around the world. (Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration via AP)

HEADLINE	05/12 IEA: oil, gas projects fuel climate chaos
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/12/oil-gas-mega-projects-climate-ia-fatih-birol-carbon-bombs-global-energy-crisis-fossil-fuel">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/12/oil-gas-mega-projects-climate-ia-fatih-birol-carbon-bombs-global-energy-crisis-fossil-fuel</a>

## GIST

The world's leading energy economist has warned against investing in large new oil and gas developments, which would have little impact on the current energy crisis and soaring fuel prices but spell devastation to the planet.

Fatih Birol, the executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), was responding to an [investigation in the Guardian](#) that revealed fossil fuel companies were planning huge "carbon bomb" projects that would drive climate catastrophe.

He said countries must seek to replace Russian oil and gas in the near term without damaging their long-term prospects.

"I understand some countries may look at new fossil fuels but they should remember it takes many years to start production," he said. "[Such projects] are not the solution to our urgent energy security needs and they will lock in fossil fuel use."

Revelations by the Guardian show nearly 200 carbon bomb projects are in planning, or have already started pumping, that will each result in at least 1bn tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions over their lifetimes, equivalent to about 18 years of current global emissions.

Companies pursuing such developments could end up with uneconomic stranded assets, Birol warned. "If the world is to succeed in moving to net zero, these projects may fail to recover their upfront development costs," he said in an interview with the Guardian.

Soaring global energy prices have led governments to seek new sources of fossil fuels. "I do understand why countries are reacting like this," he said. "But there is the issue of the time horizon."

Big new exploratory projects for oil, gas and coal would take years to produce any fuel and could lock in high greenhouse gas emissions for decades, Birol warned.

"The most suitable projects are those with short lead times and quick payback periods, such as expanding production from existing fields," he said.

Using existing sources more efficiently would also help reduce emissions, Birol noted.

He said governments must also urgently seek to reduce fossil fuel demand, through home insulation, cutting speed limits, making public transport cheap or free and introducing car-free days in cities.

"If we do not have these voluntary measures, I'm afraid that energy rationing may be on the table," he said.

Birol said unlike in previous oil shocks, such as those of the 1970s, the world now had cheap alternatives available in the form of solar and wind power, which had plummeted in price. This should prompt governments and companies to push harder for renewable energy.

"I believe we have the chance to make this a historic turning point to a cleaner and more secure energy system," he said. "This is the first time I have seen such momentum behind the change to clean energy."

"The world does not need to choose between solving the energy crisis and climate crisis, we can do both." The UN secretary general also called for an end to new fossil fuel projects, warning that climate change posed "an existential threat to us all – to the whole world".

Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, António Guterres said: "Main emitters must drastically cut emissions, starting now. This means accelerating the end of our fossil fuel addiction and speeding up the deployment of clean renewable energy."

The IEA advised almost exactly a year ago that [no new gas, oil or coal development could take place](#) from this year onwards if the world was to limit global heating to 1.5C. That finding caused shockwaves among governments in the run-up to the [UN Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow in November](#), where leaders agreed to bring forward national plans in line with the 1.5C limit.

But many countries, and private sector companies, have ignored the advice, as the Guardian's investigation of fossil fuel projects under development has shown. These carbon bombs would in effect eliminate any hope of staying within the 1.5C threshold.

Greg Muttitt, an energy expert at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, said: "Governments and companies often suffer from a form of cognitive dissonance: while recognising the urgency and severity of the climate threat, they still keep developing new oil, gas and coalfields and mines that will worsen the problem. The policy answer is a simple one: when in a hole, you need to stop digging."

Greenpeace said the Guardian's investigation revealed the "fossil fuel industry's business model remains a blueprint for climate catastrophe".

"Investment plans by oil and gas firms will blow us past every assessment of what is safe for the climate, and that's shocking," said the group's senior climate adviser Charlie Kronick.

"But what's truly shocking is that they are not hiding it. These activities are legal and in fact are encouraged by governments around the world, particularly the ones that have the biggest reserves and the most to lose."

Caroline Lucas, an MP for the UK's Green party, said in response to the Guardian's investigation: "Governments seem intent on sending us towards our own destruction. How many more times must we tell fossil fuel companies to [#keepitintheground](#)?"

Ed Miliband, the shadow climate change and net zero secretary, said: "The answer to a global fossil fuel crisis cannot be to double down on fossil fuels. Every country must go further to rapidly accelerate the transition to clean energy.

"That's the right response to the climate crisis, but it's also the right response to the cost of living and energy security crises too – with renewables now by far the cheapest and most secure form of energy.

"Governments around the world should be urgently investing in a green energy sprint to shift decisively off destructive, expensive, and volatile fossil fuels for good."

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HEADLINE	05/12 Plants grown in moon soil for first time
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/may/12/scientists-grow-plants-moon-soil-first-time">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/may/12/scientists-grow-plants-moon-soil-first-time</a>
GIST	<p>For the first time, scientists have grown plants in soil from the moon collected by Nasa's Apollo astronauts.</p> <p>Researchers had no idea if anything would sprout in the harsh moon dirt and wanted to see if it could be used to grow food by a new generation of lunar explorers. The results stunned them.</p> <p>"Holy cow. Plants actually grow in lunar stuff. Are you kidding me?" said Robert Ferl of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.</p> <p>Ferl and his colleagues planted thale cress in moon soil returned by Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, and other moonwalkers years ago and the seeds sprouted.</p>



The downside was that after the first week, the coarseness and other properties of the lunar soil stressed the small, flowering weeds so much that they grew more slowly than seedlings planted in fake moon dirt from Earth.

Most of the moon plants ended up stunted. Results were published on Thursday in Communications Biology.

The longer the soil was exposed to punishing cosmic radiation and solar wind on the moon, the worse the plants seemed to do.

The Apollo 11 samples – exposed a couple of billion years longer to the elements because of the lunar Sea of Tranquility’s older surface – were the least conducive for growth, according to scientists.

“This is a big step forward to know that you can grow plants,” said Simon Gilroy, a space plant biologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who had no role in the study. “The real next step is to go and do it on the surface of the moon.”

Moon dirt is full of tiny, glass fragments from micrometeorite impacts that got everywhere in the Apollo lunar landers and wore down the moonwalkers’ spacesuits.

One solution might be to use younger geologic spots on the moon, like lava flows, for digging up planting soil. The environment also could be tweaked, altering the nutrient mixture or adjusting the artificial lighting.

Only 842 pounds of moon rocks and soil were brought back by six Apollo crews, and most was locked away.

Nasa finally doled out 12 grams to the University of Florida researchers early last year, and the long-awaited planting took place last May in a lab.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/12 Children ‘desperados’ in police shootout
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/us/middle-school-shootout-police.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/us/middle-school-shootout-police.html</a>
GIST	<p>ENTERPRISE, Fla. — It was getting dark, so sheriff’s deputies used the lights on their rifles to get a better look at the two children who had been holed up in a suburban house for more than an hour.</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Nicole Jackson was using a metal baton to smash mirrors, a bathtub and furniture. As the officers closed in, she flipped her middle finger at them and strapped a loaded 12-gauge shotgun around her neck. A 12-year-old boy who had joined her in the escape from a nearby group home grabbed an AK-47 assault rifle.</p> <p>The Volusia County sheriff’s deputies already knew Nicole well. They had been called repeatedly to her house in nearby Deltona, Fla., responding to complaints that she was stealing neighbors’ pets, breaking windows in a rage, trying to set the house on fire.</p> <p>Now, the eighth grader was crouched on one knee near a garbage can in the driveway, a .22-caliber pistol tucked in her waistband, the shotgun pointed straight at the officers. Several gunshots rang out from the house.</p> <p>“Lieutenant, I’m all for not killing kids and stuff,” Sgt. Omar Bello told his fellow officers, according to a state review of officers’ body camera footage from the scene. “But, I mean, if they’re shooting at us, we have to put an end to this.”</p>

For 10 seconds, eight sheriff's deputies fired toward the children, unloading 66 rounds from their Glock service weapons and .223-caliber rifles. Nicole screamed in pain, and the boy came out of the house with his hands up. "You shot my friend!" he shouted. "Don't shoot me!"

The case of the juvenile "Bonnie and Clyde," as they came to be known in a case that made headlines across the country, ended on that evening in June with Nicole hospitalized with eight gunshot wounds and charged as an adult with armed burglary and attempted murder of a police officer. The boy, who is not being identified because he was charged in juvenile court, faced similar charges.

Sheriff Mike Chitwood blasted the adolescent "desperadoes" but also laid blame on a state juvenile justice system that he said was leaving a growing number of troubled children out on the streets to grow into dangerous habitual felons.

For years, Nicole had cycled in and out of mental hospitals, foster care and group homes, one of tens of thousands of children who are ordered each year into crisis mental health custody in Florida.

Her story is rife with red flags that waved for years, seemingly unnoticed. A review of hundreds of pages of police reports, case records and prosecution documents, along with interviews of Nicole, her family, group home employees and lawyers, shows that Nicole was placed in five group homes, one foster home and four mental hospitals in the two years after she was removed from her mother's custody and made a ward of the state. She was committed to psychiatric facilities on emergency mental health holds dozens of times during the course of her childhood.

Yet she received intensive residential therapeutic care just once, state records show. It lasted for less than a month.

In a state still reeling from the mass murder of 17 people at a Parkland high school in 2018 — killed by a teenager with a history of mental health challenges — juvenile health advocates say Nicole's case raises serious questions about how a child could have had so many repeated interactions with police officers, social service agencies and psychiatrists without ever getting the long-term therapy that might have broken the dangerous cycle.

The answer, many of them said, is Florida's chronic underfunding of mental health services as the state's population has soared. A state grand jury in 2020 called the mental health system a "mess," noting that it provides less funding per capita for mental health care and treatment than any other state, and is managed by a patchwork of private agencies. Nearly 1,500 children at a time are typically on waiting lists for behavioral health services, according to the Florida Policy Institute.

The state instead has escalated the use of brief, emergency mental health interventions under the 1971 Baker Act, which like many state laws around the country allows for involuntary mental health commitments of up to 72 hours.

Children as young as 5 or 6 have been led away by the police in handcuffs after misbehaving at school, a process a Southern Poverty Law Center report last year called a "costly and cruel" alternative to more effective therapy. An estimated 37,000 children a year are involuntarily committed to psychiatric facilities in Florida, the report found, where they face "conditions that would harm and traumatize even adults."

"Florida is doing this at a rate that is unheard-of in any other place," said Yasamin Sharifi, who co-wrote the report.

Since the mid-20th century, community-based counseling, therapy and in some cases medication have been preferred over lengthy inpatient treatment for children with serious behavior disorders. Some of those who worked with Nicole said she was sometimes pulled out of programs that might have helped her as a result of her own bad behavior.

“People say the system has failed on me,” Nicole said in a telephone interview from Volusia County jail. “I don’t think I should go to prison. Obviously, I don’t. Little kids like me, 14-year-olds, make mistakes.

“Just not this big.”

### **A Troubled Childhood**

Both the Department of Juvenile Justice, which operates delinquency diversion programs, and the Department of Children and Families, which oversaw Nicole’s mental health care, declined to speak about her case, citing privacy laws.

Mallory McManus, a spokeswoman for the children and families agency, said the state was expanding adult mental health services to include more children, and trying to cut down on the use of involuntary mental health commitments with better preventive services that include a single point of contact for children and families.

“The goal of children’s care coordination is to overcome systemic barriers to services, enable sharing of information across organizations, and increase access to care,” she said in an email.

After the Parkland shooting in 2018, when a teenage gunman with mental problems fatally shot 17 classmates and staff members, the state poured \$28 million into mobile response and community action teams designed to help troubled children. Gov. Ron DeSantis pledged \$23 million of coronavirus relief funding in 2020 to expand mental health services and then backed plans to add a “resiliency” curriculum in the schools to help children build the mental health skills to cope with the hurdles life puts in their way.

But Nicole’s case was a conundrum from the start — a child who seemed to defy any attempt to restrain her from a very early age.

Nicole had been born in Puerto Rico but moved to the Orlando area with her parents when she was 9 months old.

Much of the time, those who knew her said, she was good-natured and compliant. But she had an explosive temper. She and her three brothers frequently brawled so violently that it took police intervention to stop them.

Her mother, Elizabeth Maldonado, who has a master’s degree in criminal justice and formerly worked as a college admissions director in Orlando, struggled to hold on to jobs while battling an opioid addiction and the tumult in her family.

They lived in a series of motels, rented houses and apartments. Hotels often kicked them out because of their frequent disturbances.

“We had to move 34 times,” said Nicole’s grandfather Elliot Maldonado, who moved in with his daughter after Nicole’s parents divorced.

Nicole was suspended from school at age 8 for going after the teacher with scissors, records show.

Ms. Maldonado once called the police to report that her daughter was setting fires, touching people inappropriately and had told people at school that she was going to shoot her family. “She is very violent and a horrible liar,” Ms. Maldonado wrote in a complaint she filed with the Orlando Police Department, stating that she was in fear for her life.

Nicole was 6 years old.

The incident would be among the first of some four dozen documented encounters Nicole had with the police over the next eight years. She was involuntarily taken to a mental hospital at least two dozen times.

“They didn’t do nothing for me,” Nicole said. “They’d send me home the next day.”

Police records show she was on a variety of medications, including antipsychotics, and had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder.

Nicole’s mother said she pleaded for help from child welfare authorities, telling them that her daughter was slipping out of control. “All the times I begged them for help with her,” she said, “nobody would listen to me.”

Social workers said in state records that Ms. Maldonado was incapable of caring for her children and frequently missed appointments for counseling or therapy. Nicole was missing weeks of school at a time, they said — though her mother said she had tried her best.

“They like to point fingers, and they are going to try to point it at me,” she said.

When the state took custody of Nicole in 2019, state records show that her mother did not put up a fight.

Nicole spent the next two years in a series of group homes, shipped off to mental hospitals — sometimes more than once in the same week — when she would get into fights with the staff.

In April 2021, Nicole got caught setting large fires in a vacant field.

“It was fun!” she told the officer who arrested her, according to body camera footage. “Nobody died.”

### **A Fateful Escape**

When the group home where she had been living refused to take her back, she was sent to the Florida United Methodist Children’s Home, a shelter for abused children that had a contract with the state to accept, as a last resort, foster children who had nowhere else to go.

Three employees at the facility, two of whom no longer work there, said in interviews that employees worried constantly that the home was not set up to handle some of the young people who were admitted under the contract — children who were often disruptive, with explosive tempers. The police were called to the home almost 300 times in 2020, according to law enforcement records.

On June 1, Nicole got into an argument with her minders at the home over a familiar topic: She wanted to go outside the fence to catch lizards. When she was not given permission, she jumped over the fence and left, hitting an employee with a stick on the way out.

She took along a 12-year-old boy, who had a disruptive history much like hers. The two children broke into a 3,400-square-foot house about a mile and a half away whose owner was not there. They broke sliding glass doors, destroyed a bathroom and smashed mirrors.

They soon found the homeowner’s guns, and started arbitrarily firing the weapons. Sheriff’s deputies, who arrived after a passer-by heard glass breaking inside the house, took up positions outside and tried to talk the children out. Nicole re-racked her shotgun.

“Make no mistake about it,” Lt. Nicholas Shephard, the senior officer on the scene, could be heard warning the other deputies on body camera footage. The young people, he said, were trying to “kill each and every one of us.” The deputies began firing.

Nicole spent a week in a hospital, but recovered. Now 15, she is being held without bail in a cell block by herself. If convicted on the attempted murder charge, she faces a sentence of up to life in an adult prison.

Many of the adults involved in her care are trying to understand how it could have come to this.

“I don’t know what to say,” Sheriff Chitwood said after the arrests. “Where have we gone wrong that a 12-year-old and 14-year-old think it’s OK to take on law enforcement? What the hell is the Department of Juvenile Justice doing sending these kids to places that can’t handle them?”

As a result of the shooting, the county now plans to use \$5.4 million in Covid-19 stimulus funds to start a family resource center for juveniles accused of crimes.

Most experts who reviewed the outlines of Nicole’s case said a stable placement in a therapeutic foster home could have helped anchor her in a counseling and treatment program designed to interrupt her disruptive behavior.

But in Florida, space in such programs is chronically lacking. In the 1990s, the state revised its child welfare laws to prioritize getting children out of troubled homes, but amid an explosive increase in the number of foster children, it failed to provide sufficient places to put them, mental health advocates say.

Larry Avallone, Nicole’s public defender, who was not authorized to discuss his client’s case, had said in court that he planned to file a motion for her to be declared mentally incompetent to stand trial, but the expert he hired changed his opinion and he decided Nicole was fit after all.

Prosecutors have offered her a chance to plead guilty in exchange for a sentence of 20 years in prison and 45 years probation, her grandfather said. The boy she was arrested with, now 13, pleaded no contest to charges of burglary and attempted murder of a law enforcement officer and was sentenced to what will probably be about three years in a juvenile correction program followed by conditional release that by law must end when he is 21.

Nicole said she expected to go to prison, but was hoping for a sentence that would leave her with enough time for what she called a “normal life.” She wanted to have a job, and to have two children, a boy and a girl.

“I want to become successful,” she said. “I want to become a doctor. If not a doctor, I want to become a veterinarian. If not a veterinarian, I want to become an actress. If not an actress, I’d become a model. If not that, I would become a detective.”

She thought a moment. “Detective might be a little hard.”

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HEADLINE	05/12 PCSD: deputies doing more with less
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/an-up-close-look-law-enforcement-pierce-county-doing-more-with-less/RH3BIGKO5NH7JEKFBQTSVWISPQ/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/an-up-close-look-law-enforcement-pierce-county-doing-more-with-less/RH3BIGKO5NH7JEKFBQTSVWISPQ/</a>
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. — The Pierce County Sheriff’s Department has been dealing with unprecedented crime levels coupled with a smaller police force.</p> <p>KIRO 7’s Aaron Wright rode along with a Pierce County deputy to get a close look at what the force is up against daily.</p> <p>Our first stop riding with Pierce County Sergeant Darren Moss featured something we’d see all day — people who appear to be impaired, accused of drinking or using drugs behind the wheel.</p>

“The whole thing started with a person sleeping in a car, possibly high. That’s the kind of calls we get. This is what we get from those calls,” Moss said.

“This guy’s passed out in a vehicle and basically trespassing. Not a big deal, but then he decides to try and book it and now we’re doing a search warrant for all this stuff and he’s sitting in jail now,” explained Moss.

A short time later, a second DUI stop. This one was in the middle of the afternoon.

“It was apparent when we stepped on the scene she was woozy and wobbly. Another alcohol-related call to add to the box today,” said Moss.

Moss, a 13-year veteran and Pierce County native, has seen firsthand how the job has changed.

“We have to be counselors, we have to be police officers, we have to be marriage counselors, we have to be experts on raising kids, experts on de-escalation, experts on mental health, we have to be experts on fraud crimes, financial crimes,” explained Moss.

According to a Pierce County crime analysis, Central Patrol has seen a massive increase in crime. Armed robberies are up 196%, aggravated assaults are up 52%, car thefts are up 121% and non-residential burglaries are up 93%.

This analysis is a year-to-date measure of where crime levels stand compared to the past five years.

The early evening saw a mix of traffic calls. A speeding driver is let off with a warning, and a person sleeping behind the wheel turns out to be a man waiting for his friends.

“Somebody called about you. They’re worried about you, said you were passed out in the vehicle,” Moss told the man.

And Moss helps with traffic after a meal delivery driver is struck at an intersection.

As the sun sets, the intensity of calls turns up.

“He was going super slow and a guy goes around him, then he guns it, then jumps the curb and hits the cable line,” said crash witness Andrew Hutton.

“He ran into the cable that’s holding the pole. When they got here, he was unconscious in the vehicle and firefighters got here and believed he was under the influence of something and gave him Narcan,” Moss said, explaining the crash scene.

Next up is an unruly man inside a grocery store.

“It started as an unwanted person at Albertson’s and now that person was physically fighting with two customers, so we are trying to see if we can get there so we can break it up and see what this guy’s problem is,” said Moss.

After confronting the man, officers can assess the situation and determine what to do next.

“This is a shoplift. Two customers were trying to stop him from leaving and he got into an altercation with them. We’ll see what the deputies decide to do, they might release him or issue a ticket. We don’t have a physical assault, so we don’t have anything to take him to jail for, really.”

It wouldn’t be long before we heard from the man called Roberto again.

“He’s saying, ‘Let me in the bathroom.’ The bathroom’s closed. He kept on getting closer and closer,” said a Walgreens employee, describing Roberto’s actions inside the store.

At this point, EMS, deputies, and firemen are on the scene trying to get Roberto to accept help and go to a hospital or shelter.

“Otherwise, he’s going to become a victim of a crime, he might commit a crime, or he could just become a victim of circumstances. He lost his jacket, his feet are in terrible condition,” said Moss explaining the urgency in getting Roberto help.

Under Washington state law, they can’t force Roberto to do anything he doesn’t want to.

“Our goal is to resolve whatever issue he’s having, but he’s not working with us,” said Moss.

While first responders were trying to help Roberto, one deputy on the scene told us twenty 911 calls were on hold and there were two buildings on fire.

Designated Crisis Responders arrive to help Roberto, they have skills to help a person in crisis and can see if there’s a case history in Pierce County.

Crisis Responders discover that Roberto’s family has signed a Joel’s Law petition. This move means Roberto can be involuntarily detained.

“If those mental health workers weren’t here, would you know about that court order?” Wright asked Moss.

“We wouldn’t have known about that court order,” Moss replied.

“He’s going to get a better result getting care and not sitting in jail?” Wright asked.

“Correct, if he sits in jail, we do have mental health professionals, but we don’t have the facility to treat him there - jail is not going to resolve his problem,” Moss explained.

Deputies aren’t the only ones feeling the squeeze. On that day alone, 911 dispatchers handled 633 calls. That’s an average of 28 calls an hour and a call every two minutes.

The sheriff’s department is offering sign-on bonuses of \$15,000 for lateral hires.

On Wednesday night, the Pierce County council voted to fund \$10,000 retention bonuses for certain deputies.

The sheriff’s department is currently down 50 positions.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Effort to end pot-related incarcerations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/push-to-end-marijuana-related-incarcerations/281-9481433b-39b9-4347-9fad-dbf1bcf26982">https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/push-to-end-marijuana-related-incarcerations/281-9481433b-39b9-4347-9fad-dbf1bcf26982</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A collaboration between Seattle-based artist Teddy "Stat" Phillips and Washington cannabis grower Solstice aims to draw attention to what they say is a contradiction in need of correction: <a href="#">people still incarcerated on marijuana-related offenses</a> while cannabis, as an industry, rakes in billions.</p> <p>Since its inception in 2010, Solstice has seen an evolution in attitudes toward, and laws surrounding, cannabis, but says a widely varying patchwork of policies still exists nationwide. The company began serving patients who used medical marijuana and grew from there.</p>



"We really focused on legalization, on medical cannabis, and fast forward ten years- we accomplished that in Washington state, we accomplished that in a lot of states in the US, and so many people feel like the battle's kind of over, but it's not," Solstice CEO and Co-Founder Will Denman said.

The company launched an artist series to elevate local voices through the platform of their products, and when they reached out to Phillips, he proposed a campaign drawing attention and donating money to the [Last Prisoner Project](#).

"Even the establishment we're in right now, they're selling cannabis, but people who got locked up a while ago are still doing time on it," Phillips said. "So it's a systemic issue, but I'm happy to have partners that see the issue and want to bring awareness to it as well."

Phillips said the "Free the Homies" artwork includes two designs: one inspired by Monopoly's "Get Out of Jail Free" card, and another depicting Allen Russell, [serving a life sentence](#). Along with raising awareness of all incarcerations, they are sharing education about the disproportionate number of Black people who are incarcerated for marijuana-related offenses, and the disproportionately low number of Black-owned legal cannabis businesses.

"What we're advocating for is that they expunge the records and release the prisoners," Phillips said. The pre-rolls with artwork will be on sale at [Have a Heart](#) and [The Reef](#). A donation will go to the [Last Prisoner Project](#). For further education, they are directing people to the Last Prisoner Project, the [Drug Policy Alliance](#) and the [ACLU](#).

"When Teddy brought up the idea of Last Prisoner Project and wanted to put voice to some of the issues we still have with the amount of people we still have in jail for cannabis-related crimes, it was a no-brainer," Denman said. "It's kind of the next step in the process for us, and at Solstice, we feel like we've accomplished so much but there's still so much left to do."

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HEADLINE	05/12 Death deepens mystery of Alabama jailer
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/05/12/vicky-white-alabama-corrections-casey/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/05/12/vicky-white-alabama-corrections-casey/</a>
GIST	<p>Vicky White had talked for months about retiring, according to her boss, the sheriff. Her 16-year career at an Alabama county jail was supposed to end with one last accolade: Her colleagues had voted her corrections employee of the year.</p> <p>Then, on her final day last month, White ran off with a man awaiting trial on murder charges.</p> <p>Authorities soon surmised that 56-year-old Vicky White and 38-year-old Casey White were not related but had a "jailhouse romance." Lauderdale County Sheriff Rick Singleton said inmates recounted favoritism and "extra food" on Casey White's trays.</p> <p>"I've learned that you just don't know people sometimes," Singleton said at a news conference Monday, as an 11-day search came to an end with a car crash, Casey White's capture and Vicky White's death, eventually ruled a suicide.</p> <p>Officials have described a trusted supervisor who quietly uprooted her life to prepare for the escape — selling her house, withdrawing about \$90,000 in cash and buying men's clothing in the days before the getaway. She exploited her authority as second-in-command at the jail, they said, citing a nonexistent court appointment to whisk Casey White away in a patrol car.</p> <p>But even those who worked with Vicky White closely for years said she shared little about her personal life, complicating their search for an explanation.</p> <p>"She's not a big talker," Lauderdale County District Attorney Chris Connolly said in an interview this week. "She wasn't chatty."</p>

“She just did her job,” he added — until April 29.

That job was tough, said Jason Butler, the county’s director of corrections. Inmates could be violent and verbally abusive, he said, and sometimes Vicky White talked about quitting.

Still, she excelled — she de-escalated when confrontations broke out, Butler said, and worked the halls even as an administrator. Once, when a prisoner bit someone, she grabbed the inmate’s face to keep the person’s mouth still.

“She was a hands-on person,” Connolly said, and she “didn’t have bureaucracy get in the way of making things happen.”

In an interview Wednesday, Butler said he could not point to any red flags about Vicky White, even in hindsight. She never suggested she was lonely, he said. She had divorced her husband many years ago, according to public records. But Butler said she was close with family members.

She moved in with her mother, Pat Davis, after selling her house in the tiny town of Lexington, Ala., according to Davis’s interview in early May with Alabama news station WAAY-TV. “I told her she could stay as long as she wanted to, because she was my daughter,” said Davis, who said the topic of Casey White never came up. The Washington Post could not reach Davis or other relatives this week.

Casey White came into contact with Vicky White in 2020, officials said, when the inmate came to the Lauderdale County jail for court proceedings. Already serving a 75-year sentence for a slew of violent crimes, including attempted murder, he had confessed to a Lauderdale County murder from prison, according to authorities.

A lawyer representing Casey White declined to comment Wednesday. His client pleaded not guilty to the murder charges, citing “mental disease or defect.”

Casey White spent about three months in county custody that year, the district attorney said, and roughly four months more in 2021. Awaiting trial in the stabbing death of Connie Ridgeway, he returned to the jail on Feb. 24 — the same day online bidding for Vicky White’s home was set to close.

The house sold 11 days before the escape for \$95,550, according to public records. The price was below market value.

Renee Smith Hamm told The Post that Vicky White would always wave to her from the front porch. She recounted growing up with White in the area — they were best friends in school — and “getting in little troubles, having fun.”

“She loved her mom and daddy so much, and I can’t see her just up and leaving,” the 58-year-old said. “It hurts,” she said later, tearing up.

Surveillance video captured the escape on April 29, when Vicky White claimed she was taking Casey White to a mental health evaluation a few blocks away, according to authorities. Protocol requires that two employees transport any inmate with such serious charges, they said, but 5-foot-5 Vicky White led the 6-foot-9 prisoner out the door alone.

Soon the pair had ditched the sheriff’s car in a parking lot and taken off in an orange Ford Edge that Vicky White bought under an alias, officials said. It took several hours for Vicky White’s colleagues to sound the alarm.

At a news conference that day, the sheriff said, “We’re assuming at this point that she was taken against her will.”

“I can tell you that every employee in this office is shocked,” he told reporters.

How exactly the two developed a relationship is not clear. Lauderdale County officials say Vicky White called Casey White while he was away in state prison, but they have not shared details about the recordings. As the search widened this month, authorities said they had mounting evidence of a “special” bond between the pair.

Whatever Vicky White’s role in the escape, they warned, she was in danger. The U.S. Marshals Service said Casey White had threatened to kill an ex-girlfriend if he got out of prison and shared photos of tattoos allegedly linked to a prison gang claiming White supremacy.

At first, officials said, the Whites sped away from Alabama. The Ford Edge wound up in a Tennessee tow lot about two hours from the jail. In early May, the pair left another vehicle at a carwash in Evansville, Ind.

But then they seemed to stay put, booking a 14-day stay at the Motel 41 in Evansville with a stock of wigs and guns. They may have paid a homeless man to check them in, according to local law enforcement.

That gave a Marshals Service task force time to zero in.

Authorities linked the Whites to the carwash and yet another vehicle: a Cadillac caught there on surveillance footage. On Monday, they said, an Evansville police officer reported a matching car at the Motel 41.

When the Whites emerged and abruptly drove off, members of the task force were waiting, said Vanderburgh County Sheriff Dave Wedding. The pursuit ended in less than four minutes, he said, when officers rammed the Cadillac into a ditch to stop it.

Police learned later that Casey White was ready for a “shootout,” the sheriff said, characterizing the crash as one that may have saved lives.

“Air bags are going up,” Vicky White can be heard saying in a 911 call from the Cadillac, apparently placed mid-chase. “Let’s get out and run.” Seconds later, there are sirens, bangs and a high-pitched yelp.

Officials said they found Vicky White holding the gun that killed her.

“She got her finger on the trigger,” a male voice says on the 911 call.

Casey White surrendered while insisting he did not shoot the woman, according to law enforcement. He called her his “wife,” the Marshals Service said, though officials say there is no evidence they were married.

Vicky White was pronounced dead at a hospital that evening, in what the coroner later ruled a suicide. On NewsNation that night, the sheriff said he had feared this outcome. “More so than facing the charges, I think facing her family and her co-workers ... I was just concerned that that would really weigh on her,” he said.

Connolly, the district attorney who has listened to some of investigators’ interviews with Casey White, said the prisoner claimed that Vicky White was his “only friend ... in the world.” But he puts little stock in those words.

Butler, the corrections director, said Wednesday that only Vicky White could explain her choices to her colleagues.

“I just choose to remember her how it was before,” he said.

HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Minor crime on record: vacate eligible?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article261355742.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article261355742.html</a>
GIST	<p>A new online tool launched Wednesday where Washington residents can determine whether they are eligible to have some criminal convictions removed from their record.</p> <p>The free Vacation Eligibility Calculator quickly helps users check the status of their eligibility through a series of questions, and the website then provides steps to vacating a conviction if the person is eligible.</p> <p>The calculator is timely because the 2019 Washington Legislature unanimously passed The New Hope Act, which modified the vacation process for those with past convictions, making more Washingtonians eligible to remove convictions from their records.</p> <p>Under the law, some misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and felonies can be vacated.</p> <p>For charges not involving certain domestic violence offenses, there is a three-year waiting period after completing all conditions of a sentence. Misdemeanors resulting from certain domestic violence offenses have a five-year waiting period, as long as orders were not violated in the wait period and those individuals are not currently the subject of an order.</p> <p>The group behind the civic tech project, Clearviction, is composed of all volunteers. In a news release, the group said the mission of the project “is to benefit individuals with criminal convictions and decrease lifelong collateral consequences.” The news release said they created the online tool to support that mission by helping others navigate the process.</p> <p>As Clearviction notes on their website, past criminal convictions can be a barrier to housing, employment and education.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p><i>If you have convictions in Washington you can check your eligibility to vacate your conviction for free in less than 10 minutes!</i></p> <p><i>Click on link for the free Vacation Eligibility Calculator: <a href="https://www.clearviction.org/">https://www.clearviction.org/</a></i></p>

HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Arrests; mass shooting at Dallas concert</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/men-arrested-mass-shooting-dallas-concert-left-dead/story?id=84674456">https://abcnews.go.com/US/men-arrested-mass-shooting-dallas-concert-left-dead/story?id=84674456</a>
GIST	<p>Two suspected gunmen were arrested in connection with a <a href="#">mass shooting</a> at a concert in Dallas last month that left one man dead and 16 people injured, including three juveniles, police said Thursday.</p> <p>The suspects were identified as Astonial Calhoun, 25, and Devojiea Givens, 26, according to police. They were arrested Wednesday by Dallas police, the U.S. Marshals Service North Texas Fugitive Task Force and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Crime Task Force, officials said.</p> <p>Both men were charged with felony deadly conduct and were being held Thursday at the Dallas County Jail, pending an arraignment, according to the Dallas Police Department.</p> <p>Dallas homicide investigators found evidence connecting Calhoun and Givens to the shooting that occurred in the early morning hours of April 3 at the Second Annual Epic Easter Bike Out &amp; Field Party, police said in a statement. The event was billed as a family-fun trail ride and outdoor concert.</p> <p>During a news conference Thursday afternoon, Dallas Police Chief Eddie Garcia declined to disclose what evidence led homicide detectives to arrest Calhoun and Givens.</p> <p>"A preliminary investigation has determined that following a fight that broke out at the event, Calhoun and Givens both fired handguns," Garcia said. "The preliminary investigation determined Givens and Calhoun shot into the crowd."</p>

At the time of shooting, Givens was free on bond after being arrested in late January on another deadly conduct charge stemming from an incident in the Dallas suburb of Hutchins, Garcia said.

Garcia said the investigation is ongoing and detectives are working to identify other suspects they allege fired weapons, as well as those involved in the fight that preceded the shooting.

"Our thoughts continue to be with our victims, their families and we have an incredible team of men and women working this case to find those who were ultimately responsible," Garcia said.

Attorney information for the two men arrested was not immediately available.

Police asked that anyone with video footage or photos of the fight and shooting to upload them to the police department's evidence collection [online portal](#).

A witness told ABC affiliate station WFAA in Dallas that the event was "jam-packed" with people and described a chaotic scene as gunfire prompted concert goers to run in all directions seeking cover. The chaos prevented police and emergency vehicle from quickly entering the scene to treat victims.

Police said the organizers of the concert that drew about 2,000 people did not have a permit to hold the event or an emergency plan.

The event's organizer, Germaud Lyons, who goes by the nickname Bossman Bubba, [said in a statement](#) on Facebook April 3 that he was saddened by the shooting and blamed the incident on a higher than expected turnout.

"We took the necessary steps to offer safety by having Dallas Police officers and security personnel on scene. Additionally, emergency officers and vehicles were on standby. However, some things were still out of our control," the statement said.

The person killed was identified by police as 26-year-old Kealon Dejuane Gilmore. Police said Gilmore was found lying near the stage with a gunshot wound to the head and was pronounced dead at the scene. Sixteen other people were injured in the shooting and taken to hospitals in private vehicles or by ambulances, police said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Seattle's shoplifting accountability</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/shoplifting-accountability-what-happened-to-the-21-people-arrested-in-one-day-at-one-store">https://www.q13fox.com/news/shoplifting-accountability-what-happened-to-the-21-people-arrested-in-one-day-at-one-store</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - There is a drumbeat of criticism that <a href="#">Seattle's criminal justice system</a> is broken when it comes to repeat offenders and petty crime.</p> <p>On March 4, Mayor Bruce Harrell announced "<a href="#">Operation New Day</a>", an emphasis by <a href="#">Seattle Police Department</a> (SPD) and prosecutors from the City Attorney, <a href="#">King County</a> and the Department of Justice to heighten coordination and tackle the issue.</p> <p>Hotspot emphasis patrols began on 3rd Ave. in downtown and 12th Ave. and Jackson St. in Little Saigon. Both locations became well publicized projects of Operation New Day.</p> <p>However, there was earlier Operation New Day emphasis on Feb. 11 at the downtown Target Store at 2nd Ave. and Pike St. Undercover officers from the <a href="#">Seattle</a> Police spent all day catching shoplifters. The store is one of the most shoplifted stores in the city.</p> <p>Sergeant Randy Huserik of SPD's Communication Office told us two weeks after the operation that 21 people were arrested and 18 were taken to the King County Jail. Booking people at the jail for theft and shoplifting was unusual.</p>

During COVID, the jail has not been accepting people accused of non-violent property crimes. Since this was considered an Operation New Day emphasis, the jail had agreed to accept the bookings, Huserik said.

Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison had also just announced a goal of making charging decisions within five days of receiving a case from Seattle Police for prosecution.

We wanted to see what happened to the 21 people arrested that day - who were charged, who may still be in jail and has anybody been held accountable for their alleged shoplifting.

Considering that charging decisions were part of our investigation, we did not contact the City Attorney's Office about our story and relied on Seattle Municipal Court documents, King County Jail booking records and Washington State Patrol Watch Reports that provide a synopsis of a person's criminal history.

A big obstacle came when we could not find all the bookings at the King County Jail on Feb. 11. Public access to the booking logs allows a person to search for an inmate's records using their name, birthday and location, but not a general search for anyone booked on a specific date.

Major Lisaye Manning with the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention confirmed that it's not possible to search for all jail bookings on a particular date and hopes to offer that ability in the future.

We filed a public disclosure request for all the cases referred to the City Attorney's Office for prosecution that involved a shoplifting arrest at the Target in February.

SPD sent us case information for nine people. We then went into Seattle Municipal Court case files to see what happened to them.

Booking records show seven of the nine were booked into jail, with some spending the night until they appeared in front of the judge the following day.

All but one were released from jail on their promise to appear at the next court date. Only one was required to post a bail of \$1,000 to get out, which he did.

All nine were charged with theft by the City Attorney, but the timing of the decision to do so was varied. The range was the following day on Feb. 12 to March 31.

Of the nine offenders, everyone had some previous encounter with law enforcement; either accused of a crime or had multiple convictions.

There is Christina Dineen, for example. The State Patrol Watch Report shows three felonies, six gross misdemeanors and six misdemeanor convictions or cases filed against them. Most of them are for theft.

However, court records show she has failed to show up for multiple court dates and now there is a bench warrant for her arrest.

In addition, there is Aliyah Rowe. The Watch Report shows the 31-year-old has three felony convictions, including one for organized retail theft and 13 gross misdemeanor convictions or cases filed against her. The cases predominately involve theft.

She also has failed to appear at her court dates and a warrant has been issued for her arrest.

There's Samantha Cranor. The Watch Report shows 32 gross misdemeanor convictions or cases against her, mostly for theft. She was given the less restrictive Community Court route, but she has failed to make court dates. Community Court has not issued bench warrants for failing to appear.

	<p>Then there's Rosalinda Warren, who just turned 48-years-old. The Watch Report shows seven felonies, 41 gross misdemeanors and six misdemeanors. Court records show she was arrested two more times for theft after being released for the alleged Target theft.</p> <p>She is in jail and may remain there, because she is on the City Attorney's list of 118 'high utilizer' offenders that have been cycling in and out of the court system. She has multiple open cases against her.</p> <p>The City Attorney working with law enforcement has made it a point to get people on the list off the street.</p> <p>To summarize, SPD said there were 21 arrests at the Target on Feb. 11, but we received only nine cases from SPD that were sent to the City Attorney for prosecution.</p> <p>The City Attorney did file theft charges in all the cases, but did not meet the goal of making a charging decision in five days.</p> <p>Four of the nine have warrants for their arrest for failing to appear for their court dates, and only one is currently in jail accused of several other crimes.</p> <p>Nobody has gone to trial or had their case dismissed.</p> <p>The wheels of justice turn slow.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Court: drivers high on pot can get a DUI</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/wa-drivers-can-get-duis-for-driving-while-high-state-supreme-court-finds/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/wa-drivers-can-get-duis-for-driving-while-high-state-supreme-court-finds/</a>
GIST	<p>Washingtonians can receive a DUI for driving while high, the state's Supreme Court <a href="#">concluded Thursday</a>, a decision that upholds the state's decade-old law regulating marijuana use behind the wheel of a car.</p> <p>All nine justices rejected Douglas Fraser's argument that his 2017 DUI was based on an arbitrary and vague standard for THC levels in the blood. Although the justices acknowledged that the correlation between THC levels and impairment is challenging to pinpoint, they found that blood measurements nevertheless provide a useful and constitutionally acceptable measurement.</p> <p>"Although this limit may not be perfect in terms of identifying degree of impairment for all individuals, it is reasonably and substantially related to recent consumption, which is related to impairment," Justice G. Helen Whitener wrote in the court's majority opinion, which was signed by her eight colleagues.</p> <p>A Washington State Patrol trooper pulled over Fraser near Everett Mall in July 2017 after seeing him speeding alone in an HOV lane, changing lanes erratically and cutting off other drivers, according to the trooper.</p> <p>When the trooper approached the car, he noticed Fraser was wearing an employee badge from a local cannabis dispensary, which Fraser then removed.</p> <p>The trooper said Fraser was shaking, sweating and had dark circles under his eyes.</p> <p>According to the trooper, Fraser said he had smoked "half a day" earlier but that he no longer felt impaired. After performing several field tests, the trooper arrested Fraser on suspicion of DUI.</p> <p>A test later showed Fraser had a THC blood concentration of 9.4 nanograms per milliliter, with a margin of error of 2.5. That put his THC blood concentration above the state's 5 ng/ml limit.</p> <p>Fraser argued in court that the limit was not correlated to any real measure of impairment and was therefore arbitrary, vague and unconstitutional. He backed his opinion with testimony from a doctor who</p>



	<p>said the effect of a given level of THC can vary significantly from person to person, depending on body fat and frequency of cannabis use.</p> <p>The justices agreed that impairment standards based solely on THC blood concentration can't be generalized to the entire population but disagreed that meant the state's standard was vague or arbitrary.</p> <p>For one, that's because marijuana became legal in Washington via a people's initiative, so the burden for proving the standard unconstitutional is high. Additionally, for both alcohol and marijuana, the standard is based on perceived impairment or blood levels.</p> <p>And while driving and cannabis use are both legal, neither is a right, the justices said. The impairment caused by 5 ng/ml of THC in the blood may vary, but the limit serves its purpose by discouraging drivers from taking to the roads after using marijuana.</p> <p>"The laws aim to deter people who have consumed cannabis from driving when there is a possibility they could be impaired, thus promoting some public interest of highway safety," Whitener wrote.</p> <p>It's reasonable to assume the law will continue to do just that, Whitener wrote, and "the highways will be safer because of it."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/12 Cartel financed Oregon pot farms expand</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Cartel-financed-Oregon-pot-farms-expand-to-17169114.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Cartel-financed-Oregon-pot-farms-expand-to-17169114.php</a>
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Foreign drug cartels that established illegal outdoor marijuana farms in Oregon last year are adapting as pressure on them begins to mount, law enforcement officials said Thursday.</p> <p>New challenges are emerging as a task force created by the Legislature met for the first time to figure out how to combat cannabis-related problems, some of which threaten Oregon's legal, regulated recreational marijuana industry.</p> <p>The Task Force on Cannabis-Derived Intoxicants and Illegal Cannabis Production is also responsible for recommending funding and command structure to enable law enforcement to combat illegal cannabis production, changes to state laws to address labor trafficking and water theft by the cartel-financed pot farms and regulations on genetic engineering of cannabis, among other issues.</p> <p>"It started with a simple ask of help and it's turned into, 'Oh, my goodness, there's so much to deal with.' And so I think we just have to kind of take one at a time," said state Rep. Lily Morgan, a Republican from the southern town of Grants Pass, as the task force met via video link.</p> <p>One of the biggest problems is the recent proliferation of illegal, industrial-sized marijuana farms.</p> <p>In early 2021, hundreds of greenhouses began cropping up in southern Oregon's Josephine and Jackson counties — some within city limits, others brazenly established along highways or tucked into remote valleys.</p> <p>They were not licensed by the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission and are financed by foreign criminal cartels, from Latin America, Europe and Asia, authorities have said. There were more pot farms than overwhelmed law enforcement officials could take down. Indoor illegal growing operations have long existed indoors, but now criminal gangs are pushing more in that direction, enabling them to grow year-round, a task force member said.</p> <p>"We're starting to hear about Josephine County, a lot of operations moving indoors," said Oregon State Police Sgt. Tyler Bechtel. "It makes it all that much harder to see it from the street, see it from the air, just smell it. And it's not a seasonal problem when you move indoors. It's a year-round problem."</p>

Josephine County Sheriff Dave Daniel, though, said he hasn't heard of cartels operating in his county moving to indoor grows and are instead lowering their profile by establishing more numerous smaller grow operations.

“They seem to be diversifying and spreading out operations to many small grows to avoid the attention,” Daniel said in an email to The Associated Press. “We anticipated this change as we have primarily been focusing on the large grows and now smaller ones. It is a good business move for them and will slow us down.”

The state police have identified dozens of ethnic-based drug trafficking organizations, each operating between five and 30 marijuana grow sites, Bechtel said.

Giving an idea of the scope of the problem, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission says 551,000 marijuana plants were seized in Jackson County, Josephine County and central Oregon's Deschutes County from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021. And that was a tiny fraction of the illegal crop. Authorities also seized almost \$3.4 million in cash in the raids.

“Despite legal avenues for purchases and sales of marijuana within Oregon, an illegal marijuana market continues to cause public safety concerns, including diversion of marijuana to other states, sales of marijuana to underage buyers, illegal cultivation of marijuana on private, state, and federal property, and enrichment of organized criminal operations,” the commission said in a report.

The report examined results after an outlay of millions of dollars in grants to the three counties to address increasing unlawful marijuana cultivation and distribution operations in Oregon. The commission said it could not judge the effectiveness of the grant program “because the illegal marijuana market is an especially nebulous sector to evaluate.”

The Task Force must provide its findings to an interim committee of the Legislature by Dec. 31, 2022.

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